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Cover art: Underpass—New York by unidentified American artist.
The artist behind the painting is unknown, but in 1981 a visitor to the Smithsonian American Art Museum recognized the depicted underpass as one located near his home in Binghamton, New York.

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1

Marxism and World Revolution

Haz Al-Din[1]

In an era of increased theoretical discourse surrounding the rise of multi-polarity, it is important to re-examine the historically Marxist view on the topic of politics and struggle at the world scale.

The history of Marxism is indexed and marked by the formation of international associations – the first, second, and third internationals. The Marxist tradition had always been committed to the principle of proletarian internationalism. Though unpublished, in *Principles of Communism* Engels aptly surmised the Marxist view of the anticipated proletarian revolution to come:

> *"It is a universal revolution and will, accordingly, have a universal range."*

Further, the rallying cry of world revolution featured prominently among the slogans of the October revolution. It also characterized, to a great extent, the propaganda of anti-Communist, reactionary and fascist forces throughout the

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1. Haz Al-Din is the Executive Chairman of the American Communist Party. He is a political theorist and thought-leader for the Infrared Media Collective.

1920's and 30's. Additionally, during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China, a strong emphasis was placed on the international nature of proletarian, socialist, and anti-imperialist revolution.

However, the slogan and notion of world revolution is most often incorrectly associated with the Trotskyist notion of 'permanent revolution' – which contrasts with the Marxist-Leninist view of building Socialism in One Country. But in fact, there is no need to concede to Trotskyism the indispensable and essential principle of proletarian internationalism and world revolution. There is no need to regard as incompatible the principles of Socialism in One Country and World Revolution.

In order to better comprehend the Marxist-Leninist view of world revolution, it suffices to draw attention to one of the most commonly cited 'paradoxes' within Marxism itself, as repeated by criticism like Leszek Kołakowski in the third volume of *Main Currents of Marxism*: That Marxism regards the anticipated proletarian revolution as objective and inevitable, while simultaneously regarding subjective class-consciousness, political willpower and leadership as an indispensable factor in the realization of said revolution. The adoption of class-consciousness is itself justified on the basis that it is scientific, and correctly reflects objective historical laws. Yet on the other hand, said class-consciousness is itself an indispensable factor in the realization of said laws. How then, can the Marxist view of proletarian revolution and socialism be *scientific*?

The major theoreticians of Social-Democracy in Europe – such as Karl Kautsky – set about to 'resolve' this paradox by regarding the victory of the proletarian revolution as inevitable insofar as the alternative would guarantee the ruin of civilization itself. Rosa Luxemburg cited Fredrich Engels as having stated that: "Bourgeois society stands at the crossroads, either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism."

In this vein, Social-Democratic thinkers gave rise to a tradition within Western Marxism which justified the necessity of socialism on the basis that the alternative would be the complete destruction of civilization – or in today's 'green' framing, the extinction of mankind itself. Regardless of the merits of such a view, in no way does this restore objective inevitability to the notion of the victory of the revolutionary proletariat. Rather, it affirms choice as the foundation for socialist politics – the choice between civilization, survival, and the choice of extinction. This is not any less methodologically voluntarist,

idealist, and antithetical to the Marxist view than the notion that socialism arises from purely moral, arbitrary, whimsical, etc. foundations.

What is misleading about the notion of socialism or barbarism is that it is relative to a specific frame of time. Engels was indeed correct that Europe stood at such a crossroads. Yet a regression into barbarism does not alter the historical inevitability of socialism – it merely delays its arrival. Perhaps one of the reasons that Lenin is often incorrectly attributed the quote: "There are decades where weeks happen, and weeks where decades happen" is since no decisive historical figure comprehended the dynamic, dialectical nature of historical time as keenly and sharply as Lenin.

Throughout the course of his life, Lenin strongly affirmed the need to regard the development of history as often moving and proceeding in 'zigzag' and roundabout ways. And of course, it was Lenin himself who resolved this theoretical 'paradox' in his many polemics with the economists (who rejected the necessity of politics) and narodniks (who rejected the necessity of regarding political contradictions as objective and rooted in economic relationships).

Often overlooked is how Lenin actually does attribute to political will and the subjective factor a role that is really decisive for the development of history: In the dimension of what neoclassical and other Rightward economists often call *time-preference*. In other words, that while the outcome of history, *insofar as there is a real history in the process of development*, is certainly determined by objective and impersonal laws, consciousness and the subjective factor can be decisive in either hastening, retarding or even temporarily regressing this development (backward). In *Against Boycott*, Lenin writes:

> *"That history usually follows a zigzag path and that a Marxist should be able to make allowance for the most complicated and fantastic zigzags of history is indisputable. But this reiteration of the indisputable has nothing to do with the question of what a Marxist should do when that same history confronts the contending forces with the choice of a straight or a zigzag path. […]*
>
> *As it happens,* ***revolutionary periods are mainly such periods in history when the clash of contending social forces, in a comparatively short space of time, decides the question of the country's choice of a direct or a zigzag path of development for a comparatively very long time****.*

> *The need for reckoning with the zigzag path does not in the least do away with the fact that* ***Marxists should be able to explain to the masses during the decisive moments of their history that the direct path is preferable****, should be able to help the masses in the struggle for the choice of the direct path, to advance slogans for that struggle, and so on."*

Here, Lenin dichotomizes 'zigzag' and 'direct' paths of developments, with the 'subjective' role of consciousness and direct political intervention often being decisive not in the determination of history, but in whether it will proceed upon a zigzag or direct path in the development of that determination. It likewise suffices to recall how urgently and pressingly Lenin regarded the need to act on the eve of the October Revolution. "*We must not wait!! We may lose everything!!"*

For Lenin, the scientific class consciousness of Marxism has the power to both accelerate and integrate the development of history. This is by correctly tying all the necessary, already-existing, and fundamentally inter-connected threads of history within a given moment *together* by way of consciousness and practical action. The development of history proceeds in such a way that brings together a host of forces and elements that, while fundamentally inter-connected materially, remain estranged at the level of consciousness.

On the one hand, all social forces are inter-connected materially at the level of the total mode-of-production, at the level of basic material-inter-dependence with respect to the subsistence of all individuals. But what threads and ties *revolutionary* forces together lies in the shared reality of contradictions. Contradictions which are definitely reflected at the level of subjective consciousness but never-the-less *insurmountable*. And it is precisely this insurmountably that gives them objectivity and lawful determination within Marxism.

Only insofar as these fundamental contradictions at the heart of society are responded to in a way that reflects their total inter-connectedness, and which *really reflects* the contradiction itself rather than only one-dimension of it, is the advance of history possible. There are infinitely many possible permutations of consciousness, choice, and action on the part of people embedded within a given historical impasse or paradox. All of these can only give expression to different variations of the same, fundamental historical impasse – unless a responsivity to the fundamental contradiction itself emerges, even by chance and accidentally, among these permutations.

Such a possibility is a common theme of literature and film. Take for example the first Joker (2019) film. Somehow, while stumbling his way through various personal tribulations and great psychological turmoil, Arthur – in a way that was completely accidental and devoid of any conscious intentionality– manages to reflect the fundamental contradictions of society, becoming the symbol of a new movement. Hegel calls the way this complex inter-play of various personalities, private intentions, and actor-networks inadvertently gives rise to a development of the world spirit the 'cunning of reason.'

Since there are infinitely many possible 'subjective' permutations, or permutations of the ways in which people can respond to the world around them, it is strictly and only a matter of probability that a given permutation will arise that correctly concentrates and reflects the totality of society, facilitating new developments of history. Of course, the mode of production, forces and relations of real, material and physical production, are what establish the range of different possible permutations of activity by individuals. Novelty at the level of history arises not simply when new permutations arise that add to the totality of production – but when they accurately reflect changes that had already occurred at the material level, material changes which the sum-total of societal activity gave rise to *inadvertently*. Not according to the conscious intentions, decisions, and choices of actors – but according to the necessarily objective nature of their inter-relations at the level of real production.

Further, the overwhelming majority of the ways in which people accurately reflect and respond to material transformations are accidental and unconscious. This is especially clear in the era of social-media – where consciously inexplicable 'memes' possess the ability to reflect changes in society with an accuracy far more acute than anything the conscious thinking of a single individual could possibly produce. And the majority of these arise accidentally, inadvertently, as one of the many infinite permutations of possible communication.

The objective inevitability of socialism is likewise a simple matter of probability. It will happen inevitably, even without the assistance of scientific consciousness. In fact, the first forms of socialist consciousness were far from scientific. Even now, the majority of revolutionary forces worldwide do not possess any scientific consciousness. The decisive role of Marxism lies not in bringing about from scratch, but *accelerating* the revolutionary process already in motion, by scientifically concentrating all revolutionary forces into a single and united organ of responsivity – the International, or at the national level, the

Communist Party. Without the assistance of Marxism, world revolution is postponed, delayed – its constituent components confused, disunited, and unable to recognize their inter-connectedness.

The majority of the constituent organizations of the First International were composed of all manner of progressive and revolutionary forces. Likewise, the third-international established anti-imperialist struggles as an indispensable part of the impending world revolution.

Today, the task of Marxism lies not in dictating to the already-existing revolutionary forces of the world the terms and conditions upon which they should set about their struggle, but in clarifying scientifically their inter-connectedness, and the fundamental contradictions of the global system that already laid the groundwork for their struggles. Only Marxism can consistently and rationally unite the forces of Russian sovereignty with the axis of resistance, China, existing socialist nations, and the international cause of labor. Such a unity is what gives real meaning and substance to the slogan of world revolution.

It is the comprehension of the already-existing revolutionary struggles as a unified plane of existence that distinguishes the Marxist-Leninist notion of World Revolution from Trotskyism. Marxists are not interested in imposing world-revolution – rather, the point is to recognize it as already existing. And the consistent and scientific application of this recognition acts as an accelerant to the process – a way of fulfilling the direct, rather than zigzag development of history.

2

Marxism, Motherhood, and How the Left's Anti-Family Agenda Dooms Future Generations

Slava Jalili [1]

In today's political landscape, there is a growing disconnect between what many on the left claim to support and the societal trends emerging from the policies they are advocating for. The Marxist ideal of a society where human relationships are rooted in solidarity, mutual respect, and collective responsibility starkly contrasts the growing trend of doomerism and anti-family rhetoric promoted by the left. As we witness the rise of the "DINK" (Dual Income, No Kids) economy and an increasing cultural preference for pets over children, it becomes clear that contemporary leftist ideology is doing more to undermine the family structure than to advance it.

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1. Slava Jalili is a Ukrainian American, member of the ACP Politburo, and correspondent at the Revolution Report media collective.

At the heart of this issue lies the discouragement of marriage and parenthood. While these are fundamental elements of society and central to the Marxist vision of collective human flourishing, the modern left has increasingly championed narratives that discourage women from pursuing family life. Ironically, these attitudes directly conflict with the very principles of Marxist thought that should prioritize family-building, community, and the nurturing of future generations.

The Rise of the DINK Economy: A Product of Capitalism, Not Socialism

The ”DINK” economy represents a cultural shift in which many couples - particularly women - choose dual incomes over having children. This shift isn’t necessarily an organic societal choice but rather a product of economic conditions largely created by capitalism. Rising housing, education, and healthcare costs, combined with stagnant wages and an increasingly unstable job market, make it harder for young people to envision a future that includes children.

From a Marxist perspective, this phenomenon isn’t a victory for women’s liberation, as some might suggest. The capitalist economy has created a system where people are forced to prioritize work and consumption over family and community. For women, this manifests in a difficult choice: sacrifice time for family to build a career, or forgo motherhood to make ends meet. The narrative of “empowerment” that the left promotes often disguises the fact that this situation is a direct consequence of capitalist exploitation, not a step toward genuine equality.

While the capitalist system profits from the exploitation of both labor and reproductive work, it simultaneously undermines the very possibility of building stable families by making parenthood economically untenable. The solution isn’t more careerism or individualism, but the transformation of societal structures that provide equitable opportunities for women to both contribute to the workforce and nurture families.

Pets Over Children: A Symptom of a Broken System

In many American households today, pets have become a substitute for children. People invest in animals for companionship, and while pets bring joy, they come without the long-term responsibility, financial commitment, and societal expectations that children bring. The rise of pets as ”family members” isn’t simply a matter of personal preference - it’s a reflection of the alienation and disillusionment caused by the capitalist system, which commodifies human relationships and reproduces a culture that sees children as burdens rather than blessings.

What’s deeply troubling here, from a Marxist perspective, is that children are the future of society and revolutionary change. By prioritizing pets over children, the dominant culture is not only making a political statement about individualism but also erasing the communal bonds that sustain future generations. This trend undermines the family as the building block of a collective and equitable society. Pets, unlike children, don’t come with the need for long-term care or the potential to question and transform the world in meaningful ways. Yet, the capitalist machine has made the prospect of raising children seem unfeasible for a growing number of people, particularly among younger generations who face a grim economic outlook.

Doomerism and the Left's Anti-Family Narrative

One of the most insidious trends among the so-called left today is a pervasive sense of ”doomerism” - the belief that the world is in an irreversible state of decline. Leftists, particularly those with a surface-level Marxist analysis, have propagated the idea that it’s irresponsible to bring children into a world threatened by climate change, economic collapse, and political instability. Instead of offering solutions that would enable families to thrive, these leftists tell young people that the future is too bleak to build meaningful lives or raise children.

Doomerism, while rooted in real concerns about the state of the world, is being used as an excuse to avoid confronting the very systemic issues that make parenthood and family life challenging in the first place. A true Marxist approach would see this pessimism not as a rallying cry, but as an obstacle to revolutionary change. Instead of pushing people away from creating families

and contributing to the future of society, the left should be working to provide the conditions for families to flourish. Free healthcare, childcare, paid parental leave, and decent wages for both parents are not just benefits - they are essential components of building a strong, revolutionary working class.

Telling people not to have children because of the fear that society is doomed only serves to keep them in a state of helplessness, preventing them from taking the necessary steps to create the kind of world that could reverse these trends. Revolutionaries need to build families, not abandon them. The socialist vision should encompass a society where raising children is seen as an integral part of societal progress, not an act of personal sacrifice.

The False Choice: Women as Mothers or Revolutionaries?

One of the most tragic aspects of the modern left's approach to family life is the promotion of a false dichotomy: the idea that women must choose between being mothers or being revolutionary. This narrative assumes that caring for children and building a revolutionary society are mutually exclusive, an idea that is deeply alien to genuine Marxist theory.

Marxism has always understood that the family is a fundamental social unit - one that, when properly supported, can contribute to the collective good. Women can, and should, be both mothers and revolutionaries. The role of motherhood should never be viewed as a hindrance to a woman's potential or her involvement in social change. Instead, it should be seen as part of the collective effort to build a new world. Women do not have to sacrifice their motherly instincts to pursue careers or political activism. The struggle for socialism must include the struggle for women to have the right to fully participate in both motherhood and revolutionary activity without facing economic or social barriers.

To create a society that empowers women, we must dismantle the structures that prevent them from having both children and fulfilling careers. We need to fight for the creation of a system that supports working parents, where child care, healthcare, and education are universally accessible and where women's labor - both in the home and in the workforce - is valued equally. Only then can women be free to choose both career and motherhood without fear of economic ruin.

Conclusion: Reclaiming the Family for Socialism

The current leftist discourse on family life, motherhood, and parenthood does not reflect the true spirit of Marxism. Rather than promoting policies that allow families to flourish, it has embraced a culture that encourages individuals - especially women - to forgo having children and embrace a future without the communal bonds that families create. This has resulted in a society where people, particularly women, are forced to choose between career and family, between individualism and collective solidarity.

A true socialist future requires a reimagining of family life, one in which women can be mothers, workers, and revolutionaries all at once. Marxists should not be discouraging people from building families, but advocating for the policies and societal structures that allow families to thrive. Children are the future of the revolution, and women must be free to nurture that future without sacrificing their aspirations. We must fight for a world where motherhood and revolution can coexist, where families are not seen as an obstacle to progress, but as a vital part of building a better, more just world for everyone.

3

The Impermanence of Alliances and the Non-Ideological Nature of Multipolarity

Dr. Christopher Mott [1]

So-called ‘permanent alliances’ have a terrible record of being permanent. The over 600-year-old Anglo-Portuguese alliance is an extreme outlier made noteworthy because there is nothing else quite like it.

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1. Dr. Christopher Mott is an international relations scholar focused on historical geopolitics, grand strategy, and the intersection of defensive realism and conceptions of sovereignty in an era of increasing multi-polarity. He holds a Ph.D. in International Relations from the University of St Andrews, an MA in International Relations from London Metropolitan University, and a BA in History from Rutgers University. He has published a book, *The Formless Empire: A Short History of Diplomacy and Warfare in Central Asia*, on the rise of indigenous forms of geopolitical strategy on the Eurasian steppe, as well as numerous peer reviewed and general audience articles on foreign policy and historical topics in a variety of places. Dr. Mott published the esteemed essay, *Woke Imperium: On the Confluence of Social Justice and Neoconservatism* in 2022, a text for which he was interviewed on The Grayzone.

Throughout history, people have sought long-term security arrangements for a variety of reasons, only to find that the ever-shifting nature of geopolitics, where all other nations tend to have a say over one's strategic dispositions, constantly makes mockery of the attempt to make security arrangements that freeze any relationship in amber.

In the 'unipolar moment' of 1991-2015 many came to ignore these clear lessons of history for the belief that they lived in truly exceptional times. History, so it was claimed, had ended. Liberal democracy was triumphant across the world and thus was assumed to have proven its teleological inevitability.[2] The American alliance network that had made it all possible was only going to grow, and initially, with the NATO alliance's eastward expansion, this did indeed seem to be the case. Within such a context the 9/11 terrorist attacks were seen as a rebellion to an inevitable order, with global jihad being the only alternative.[3]

This changed with the costly failures of the post-9/11 wars and the Great Recession of 2008. The United States had used most of its post-Cold War peace dividend to offshore its industries and asset-strip its utilities to fuel the non-material chimera of international finance. With the end of stock market reliability, the façade of the unipolar moment rapidly began to crumble. In what is commonly known as 'multipolarity', not only did the other great powers begin to reassert themselves, but even smaller less traditional powers grew in relative strength in relation to the U.S. capacity to manage world affairs as a monopoly. World hegemony, or even the bipolar Cold War-like position of a two-sided standoff, became an impossibility.[4]

This is not as brave and new an era as a panicking commentariat makes it out to be. The overwhelming majority of human history has existed in a state of multipolarity. It was the 'liberal international order' that was the freakish outlier, one based ultimately on an arrangement of power in the United States' favor dressed up as a lifestyle brand. In this way it is no different from the Roman domination of the Mediterranean Basin in the late Classical period or Mongol unipolarity in medieval Eurasia.[5] These orders are rightly seen by

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2. Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).

3. Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld* (New York: Random House, 1995).

4. Arta Moeini, Christopher Mott, et. all, "Middle Powers in a Multipolar World", *The Institute for Peace and Diplomacy* (March 26, 2022): https://peacediplomacy.org/2022/03/26/middle-powers-in-the-multipolar-world/

5. Arta Moeini and Christopher Mott, "The 'Liberal International Order' is Neither Universal nor Exceptional", *The National Interest* (June 20, 2021): https://nationalinterest.org/feature/liberal-international-order-neither-universal-nor-exceptional-188026

historians today as dependent on the power of the dominant state rather than the triumph of their telos. With the ending of the liberal international order comes the stark reality of how alliances actually work, and how romantic, ideological, or even cultural commitments perpetually fail to make them permanent arrangements. It is worth examining how this has happened in the past to further bolster examining its present and future.

How Alliances Function Under Multipolarity

No one is in charge of the international system. The United Nations derives what influence it has from the Security Council, specifically the five strongest victorious powers of the Second World War. In this way it is in fact a project upheld by state power. The U.N. has never seriously attempted to bring about world government, nor could it. Only the United States in the 1990s could have even tried to do that, a project which has now undeniably failed. No one else has the ability nor inclination to try again at present. It risks quagmire and overextension, something that the modern Chinese state, as the only viable peer competitor to the United States, seems be avoiding.

With no universal power there is no final arbiter of a common mythos, save for situational agreements reached between states. In realist political theory this is referred to as 'anarchy', or the lack of overall authority to appeal to in the international system.[6] What it also means is that common ideology or a past shared heritage has little long-term bearing in the cohesiveness of an alliance network. In fact, international arrangements that presuppose ideological solidarity could be said to be volatile, tempting their partners to discount the sovereignty of each other when practices diverge, and creating massive fallouts and breakdowns between alliance members. There are many examples of this but let us focus on two (and one in particular) to really drive the point home. Both of these examples encapsulate the end of special relationships between two important countries which once saw themselves as linked by a special destiny, but saw such relationships edge up to violent confrontation under the reality of the anarchic inter-state system.

In the aftermath of the American Revolution, the new republic saw itself as having entered a special relationship with France. The French Revolution

6. Silviya Lechner, "Why Anarchy Still Matters for International Relations: On theories and things*", Journal for International Political Theory*, Volume 13 (3), 341-359 (June 14, 2017): https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1755088217713764

initially heightened this Francophilia, with many in Paris stating they were inspired by the American experiment and giving honorary citizenship to famous figures across the ocean such as James Madison. The warm feelings were returned by many Americans who believed a new era of enlightenment politics had arrived. The shared hatred of the British was an additional common cause.[7]

A combination of factors began to challenge these initially euphoric assumptions relatively rapidly, however. The security interests of the new United States were based around avoiding war in order to implement domestic development along the Hamiltonian model that would see an economy once engineered to benefit to the British Empire as a raw resource colony reoriented to a national-industrial pole separated from dependency on Europe. Independence was not just meant to be from Britain, but from over-entanglement in European affairs more generally. The goal was to seek political separation to reflect the geographic distance of North America from Europe.[8]

France's different geography and close proximity to rival nations meant it pursued a very different path. After defeating initial attacks, the country took the offensive. Its concept of revolution likewise diverged, requiring a nation perpetually at arms and an aggressive foreign policy to maintain momentum. The two countries may have shared the avant-garde of being the late 18th centuries' revolutionary republics, but their interests diverged more after the French Revolution and the series of wars it set off. The global effects of these wars directly threatened the United States's idea of post-Revolution development. French demands for American assistance likewise threatened the growing American shipping industry, which benefited from non-alignment. British naval power also served as a deterrence against adventurism by even the many Francophile members of the government such as Thomas Jefferson. In such a context did President George Washington issue his Neutrality Proclamation of 1793. This was followed by negotiations with both Britain and Spain to settle outstanding issues and avoid looming war scares with both of those powers. With such matters coming to a close in the Jay Treaty and the Treaty of San Lorenzo (both 1795), the French viewed the actions of the United States as hostile, even claiming that its dedication to neutrality represented a

7. Jeremy D. Popkin, *A New World Begins: The History of the French Revolution* (New York: Hachette Book Group, 2019), 82-3.

8. Michael S. Kochin and Michael Taylor, *An Independent Empire: Diplomacy and War in the Making of the United States* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2020), 6-11, 23.

kind of re-colonization into British rule.[9] As Washington retired he published his now famous "Farewell Address" which cautioned the country about the dangers of being both overly hostile and overly fond of foreign nations, seeing such sentiments as distorting of the national interest through emotional attachment. Diplomacy for young and fragile nations had to be based around situational interest, not ideological consistency.[10]

A volatile domestic reaction ensued, leading to the rise of the political party system as Federalists came out in support of neutrality while Jefferson's Democrat-Republicans lobbied against it. French ministers to the U.S. openly meddled in domestic politics and French privateers, eager to make a quick profit off helpless American shipping in order to fund the reconquest of Haiti (also a revolutionary republic in the making) attacked their old allies directly. By the time of the Adams Administration, the United States found itself tacitly collaborating with the Haitians in the hopes of driving the French out of the Western Hemisphere. More importantly, an American Navy was founded, built from scratch specifically to combat the nation which had only a decade before been the most steadfast of allies. In a series of engagements, the U.S. navy would sink or capture multiple French privateers, as well as pay for its own construction simply by driving down the shipping insurance rates as French ships pulled away from proximity to North American ports.[11]

Most ironically, it would be the rise of Napoleon and the end of French democracy that would see relations restored to normal. Seeing the policies that had led to this undeclared naval war as foolish, Napoleon understood that an unaligned America was a more useful trading partner than one forced to honor obsolete alliance commitments against its will. By 1800 combat had stopped, diplomacy was restored, and soon after the Louisiana Purchase would occur. Breaking the alliance had benefited both parties in the end. Not until the temporary alliance of the First World War, over a century later, would the two countries ever be allied again.[12]

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9. Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, *The Age of Federalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 431-439.

10. Arta Moeini and Christopher Mott, "George Washington and the Birth of American Realism", *The Institute for Peace and Diplomacy* (March 11, 2024): https://peacediplomacy.org/2024/03/11/george-washington-and-the-birth-of-american-realism/

11. Ian W. Toll, *Six Frigates: The Epic History of the Founding of the U.S. Navy* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2006), 109, 144.

12. Elkins and McKitrick, *Federalism*, 646, 663-682.

Closer in time to us, we have another example of such a calamitous falling out between two ideologically linked yet geopolitically diverging nations. This would be the Sino-Soviet Split which began in the 1960s and continued on through until the end of the Cold War. Already, the supposedly unified bloc of communist nations had seen divisions arise, particularly between Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Second World War. But the sheer scale of the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China would cause their rupture to be perhaps the most significant geopolitical realignment of the Cold War Era.

The two countries had cooperated against the Japanese in 1945, then the American-led U.N. operation in the Korean War. They were fond of declaring their perpetual amity as harbingers of a communist future. Cracks over foreign policy priorities, however, had already begun to form. Often presented as an ideological rift that grew from Beijing's displeasure at Soviet Premier Nikita Khruschev's 'Secret Speech' where he denounced Stalin, the core of the growing dispute had much more to do with geopolitical autonomy. With the Chinese increasingly displeased at being treated as a subordinate nation to the Soviet Union. China and India had become violent rivals in 1962, but Moscow maintained its close relations with India and expressed outrage that it had not been told about upcoming military operations in the Himalayas by Beijing.[13] Chinese diplomacy had also delivered a plethora of border-settling treaties with neighbors- but not with the Soviet Union. As distrust mounted the un-settled borders between the two countries became flashpoints for military clashes which erupted along the border of China's northeast and Siberia. Mongolia, fearing Beijing's irredentism, provided the military hosting ground for Moscow. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea, seeking more autonomy from the Soviet Union, expressed support for the Chinese position.[14]

While the clashes would end almost as abruptly as they began, the rivalry unleashed by the formal split would manifest in other places. Notably, China opened its diplomatic options by seeking an accommodation with the United States. This was followed by an indecisive military attack on Vietnam after that countries' ouster of the China-sympathetic Khmer Rogue government in Cambodia. The Chinese would then go on to provide tacit support for the mujahadeen fighters in Afghanistan against the Soviet forces operating in that

13. Lorenz Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 46, 115-16.

14. Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy*, 1962-1967 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 87, 202.

country. Relations would not be restored to normal until the end of the Cold War. But any pretense that the Cold War was primarily ideological had already ended when Nixon met Mao two decades before.[15] The geopolitics of the pre-revolutionary region between Imperial Russia and the Qing Dynasty had reasserted themselves, implying that the contested nature of changing balances of power in an anarchic world the interplay of geographic proximity and balance of power ultimately determined long term strategy before other more ideological considerations.

The Contemporary End of `Permanent' Alliances

Thanks to the ahistorical and extremely presentist nature of the present commentariat and governing class of a later-stage neoliberal order, the false belief that international alliances can be permanent and represent a kind of mutual values=based annexation by different states is now commonplace. Hence the shock that reverberates from the press when the Trump Administration makes it clear it is breaking with the pieties of the Liberal International Order. From German politicians openly weeping in reaction to a speech from Vice President Vance, to gasps in the Pentagon press room when aid is cut to Ukraine as a negotiating tactic, it is clear that a vast institutional complex greatly resists the reality of multipolarity and the inevitable pivot back to nakedly national interest-based priorities as an adjustment to this arrangement. The ideology may have been very effective at continuing European vassalage in a post-Cold War era, but its overreach grew ever more unsustainable when interacting with the actual great powers of the world such as China and Russia, as well as the increasingly assertive middle powers such as Turkey, Iran, and India.[16]

President Trump is remarkably mercurial and erratic in his conduct of foreign policy. There may be no governing vision at all, and internal discord between underlings may be the driver of many of his decisions. That being said, his transactional nature has pointed him away from holding on to alliances in the present simply because they worked in the past. Whether the end goal is to get the outlying satrapies to increase their tribute to the metropole or to shed them as burdensome commitments (likely a bit of both) it is a large enough change to

15. Margaret Macmillan, *Seize the Hour: When Nixon Met Mao* (London: John Murray, 2006), 133.

16. Carlos Roa, “Welcome to Imperial America”, *The Institute for Peace and Diplomacy* (March 7 2025): https://peacediplomacy.org/2025/03/07/welcome-to-imperial-america/

American grand strategy that the older ways of doing things has likely been undermined to the point that it could not simply return if the Democratic Party returned to power in a large electoral sweep. The world that the establishment clung to so desperately simply no longer exists. It always was based on a global power distribution, with the United States' former domination of industrial output long since made obsolete by its own self-imposed descent into neoliberal offshoring, and its financial power being looked at with greater suspicion by more abroad every year. In order to slow this now 30 year long decline of relative power, the United States must reindustrialize at home, which requires divesting itself not only of the most distant imperial possessions, but also of the ideology that made justifying such a doomed quest for global hegemony palatable in the first place.[17]

The most onerous alliance of the American Empire, however, is unlikely to be challenged by the Trump Administration. If there is one bilateral relationship which truly illustrates the dangers of adhering to sentimental or permanent alliances based off of domestic commitments, it has to be that of Israel and the United States.

In the early Cold War, this arrangement was distant and pragmatic. France and Britain were the true die-hard backers of the early Israeli state, with the United States often taking a far more skeptical attitude as displayed by sabotaging the actions of those nations during the Suez Crisis of 1956.[18] Gradually, as the United States feared a pro-Soviet tilt among Arab nationalist governments, its security commitments with Israel only grew. By the time the Cold War had ended, Israel had established the most effective lobbying arm in Washington D.C. in all of history. The (debatable) strategic necessity of this relationship had disappeared, so now the fans of the alliance on both sides of the ocean would pivot towards ideology. Israel was "the only democracy in the Middle East", or perhaps a 'bastion of civilization'.[19] This worked on through the Global War on Terror when unhinged ideologues sold endless conflict as some kind of civilizational struggle against some vast looming and unified Islamic threat that did not actually exist outside of some stateless entities. Most importantly, the U.S. would let slip the game by pivoting towards logistically supporting many

17. Christopher Mott, "NATO, the Gargoyle of Globalism", *The Institute for Peace and Diplomacy* (October 14, 2024): https://peacediplomacy.org/2024/10/14/nato-the-gargoyle-of-globalism/

18. Office of the Historian, "The Suez Crisis, 1956", *U.S. Department of State* (accessed March 11, 2025): https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/suez

19. John Mearsheimer and Stephen Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss, and Giroux, 2008).

of those Islamist groups in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, largely in order to further Israel's goals in the region of removing all challengers to its expansion.

There has been a steady decline in the practical utility of the alliance from the perspective of rational Americans. The U.S. faces backlash from terrorist activity whenever Israel goes on a rampage in pursuit of its ultimately doomed goals of perpetual settlement and regional domination. The U.S. spends billions of dollars, decade after decade, to be baited into a war with Iran that would pose great dangers but few benefits to the American position abroad, all while domestic audiences are browbeaten by a media infatuated with this foreign state and people see their free speech rights curtailed on its behalf.[20]

It is tempting to think that this is the one alliance that could not be sacrificed to the multipolar reality. While it would be the most difficult to drop right now, its position can hardly be assumed to be perpetual. Support for Israel in the general public is collapsing, now at the lowest it has been in 25 years according to Gallup. It is also highly generational, with each new cohort of citizens disregarding the importance of the alliance in greater numbers as time goes on.[21] As the problems maintaining this overly-close relationships mount, and as the realities of polycentrism expand across the post-unipolar world, these trends will only accelerate.

Polling data may be presentist and subject to change, but these are indicative of the historical experience. Francophilia in the United States was at fever pitch in the 1790s, and that alliance had been far more important in the establishment of the country that any other. And yet, when interests diverged under conditions of multipolarity, the alliance was not only broken, but its explicit rejection was also effectively written into the United States' foreign policy doctrine for generations. This strategic posture would last well over a century for guiding the nation's approach to the great powers of the world. If the U.S. and France could divorce in the late 18th Century, so too could the U.S. and Israel go in quite different directions in the future. The historical logic of multipolarity, the world's normal state of affairs, can no longer be ignored now that history has in fact 'resumed'.

20. Yousef Munayyer, "Repressing Criticism of Israel in the United States", *Arab Center Washington DC* (January 3, 2020): https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/repressing-criticism-of-israel-in-the-united-states-trumps-executive-order/

21. Megan Brenan, "Less Than Half of U.S. Now Sympathetic Towards Israelis", *Gallup* (March 6, 2025): https://news.gallup.com/poll/657404/less-half-sympathetic-toward-israelis.aspx

4

Hans-Georg Moeller: Philosophy, Profilicity, and Wokeism

Interview with Hans-Georg Moeller [1]

Garrido: I have been teaching your book, *You and Your Profile: Identity After Authenticity* since it was published. My students always rank it amongst the best readings of the semester. There are a couple influences in the text that I think are central for you and Paul D'Ambrosio.

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1. This is a transcription of an interview with Professor Moeller, conducted by Professor Carlos L. Garrido. Hans-Georg Moeller is professor of philosophy at the Department of Philosophy and religious Studies at the University of Macau (Macau SAR, China). Moeller is author of numerous academic books and articles including of *The Radical Luhmann* (2011), *The Moral Fool: A Case for Amorality* (2009), and *The Philosophy of the Daodejing* (2006), all with Columbia University Press. He hosts two philosophical YouTube channels: *Carefree Wandering* and *Philosophy in Motion*. Moeller and D'Ambrosio are coauthors of *You and Your Profile: Identity after Authenticity* (Columbia University Press, 2021) and *Genuine Pretending: On the Philosophy of the Zhuangzi* (Columbia University Press, 2017). They are also co-recipients (with Hans-Rudolf Kantor) of the 2018 Dao Annual Best Essay Award of (issued by *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*) for their paper on "Incongruent Names: A Theme in the History of Chinese Philosophy."

As far as the historical chronology of modes of identity technology, you seem to be developing on the framework of Lionel Trilling. For profilicity, this unique mode of identity technology you and D'Ambrosio outline, you also make great use of Niklas Luhmann's concept of second order observation. Can you tell us a bit about how you and D'Ambrosio came to develop this framework? Besides Trilling and Luhmann, are there any other major intellectual sources you see your project as developing upon?

Moeller: First of all, thanks for having me and thanks for working with this book. And thanks for talking to your students about it or with your students about it. I read through your questions– they're all very good questions, and I'm happy to talk about them.

So, actually, we of course use Trilling. Paul read this book and then I read it. But the main influence for this book is the previous book that Paul and I wrote, which is on Taoist Chinese philosophy, on the philosophy of Zhuangzi. And our initial plan was to write a Taoist philosophical book for today.

And then we decided we can't really do this. We have to write two different books. We wrote a book about the old Taoism and then we wrote a book where the Taoism is implicit. And that is the second book that is *You and Your Profile*. So the major source for *You and Your Profile* is the book we wrote before. And that is also the case regarding identity technologies. We basically just use Trilling to say something that we wanted to say from our study of Taoist philosophy, and we just use Trilling to have a Western kind of framework. We're not really scholars of Trilling.

I'm not even sure that we use the terminology right in the same way that Trilling uses it, but that was not our intention anyways. So what is the connection? We read Taoism and in particular the Zhuangzi. There are two major works in early Taoism– one is the Laozi or Tao Te Ching and the other one is the Zhuangzi and we work mostly with the Zhuangzi. Now, we read the Zhuangzi very much as a critique of Confucianism, as Marxists should understand as a socio-political book, which by the way is influenced by my own study of philosophy. When I studied Chinese philosophy in the 1980s in China, I got a dialectical Marxist training regarding Chinese philosophy, so if you want to trace this reading of Taoism back you can actually trace it back to my Marxist education in Marxist China where there was real Marxism.

The idea is basically that Taoism is a socio-political critique in early China, and it is a critique of the Confucian ethics and political socio-political structure,

which was very much forcing people into what we call a “regime of sincerity”. That is, it basically imposes a very strict social hierarchy on people and they have to conform to their roles, and that is a form of suppression and a form of alienation. It places a strong pressure on people to conform to their social roles, primarily family roles and political roles, roles in the family, parents and children. You have the obedience of the children towards parents, obedience of women towards men, and so forth, but then also a very strict hierarchical system where everyone has to fulfill their roles, and Taoism criticizes that. So now we read Taoism in Trilling’s vocabulary as a critique of the “regime of sincerity”, but when we wrote the first book, we hadn’t used Trilling's vocabulary yet, and of course Trilling didn't apply this vocabulary to early China either.

The second thing that we found is that we were not happy with the current interpretations of Taoism, which read Taoism as a form of Western individualism. Taoism is usually read now as, in Trilling’s vocabulary, “the pursuit of authenticity”, because in the West there was also a “regime of sincerity” if you want to classify it in traditional Marxist vocabulary: A strong feudal system where people have to submit to their roles– not that different from Confucianism. And then, of course, the whole “age of authenticity” developed as an individualist critique of the previous kind of “regime of sincerity” in Europe. But nevertheless, we thought that this was anachronistic, that the Taoist critique of the Confucian “regime of sincerity” is not actually an individualist authentic philosophy. Instead, it’s what we call a philosophy of “genuine pretending”, which is something altogether different. That was the second aspect. So our first book was reading Taoism as a critique of sincerity or the “regime of sincerity”, but not as a defense of authenticity and not as an argument in favor of authenticity as it is usually read.

Then, because both Paul and I not only studied Chinese philosophy, but we spent many years in China and had been exposed to Chinese society, we also realized that the “age of authenticity” and the individualism connected to Taoism is very much a Western thing. We take it to be universal, but it is actually not. If you live in China, particularly in Macau, it's kind of obvious that there is a mismatch between the semantics of authenticity, (which again we found in reading the interpretations of the Zhaungzi, which always put in this authenticity framework). Then we found there's something wrong with authenticity and that actually we need a different kind of framework to understand how contemporary society functions. I would define our approach ultimately as an existentialist approach. What we call identity technologies, sincerity, authenticity, and profilicity are kind of existential modes, so to speak,

in which we build a sense of self. People nowadays build a sense of self in the mode of profilicity. We understand identity today has a lot to do with the curation of a profile.

So this is the origin of the three concepts. The first one comes from Trilling, but it actually comes from our reading of Chinese philosophy, and we reinvented the term “profilicity” on the basis of thinking that authenticity is not a good conceptual framework for describing contemporary society, particularly not on a global scale.

Garrido: That's fascinating. I had no idea that this was the story behind the book, I look forward to going back and reading the first book you and Paul wrote.

In *You and Your Profile*, You and D’Ambrosio connect the development of authenticity, as a mode of identity technology, to the development of capitalism. As a Marxist, I’ve tried to read your work on the development of profilicity as a reflection of larger developments in capitalist political economy. Do you think that the technological revolution of the last few decades, which has brought about – in my view – a revolutionizing in the forces of production, is the objective background upon which profilicity emerges? In other words, would you root the development of profilicity in the context of large political-economic developments in capitalism?

Moeller: That's also a very good question. Again, we're not really traditional Marxists, we're more like existential philosophers, though I have strong sympathy for Marxism and as I said I was also educated in Marxism from my two years I studied in China which was extensive, so I understand where your question is coming from. I think it's a good question and I have been thinking about it a lot, but our hypothesis is not so much that the new technologies (and the new economy that revolves around these technologies) are the cause for profilicity, but rather that it is the other way around. That these technologies and the consumerism around them work the way they do in the service of profilicity. We use these technologies, and we do politics in the way we do politics, and we market things in the way we market them, and we structure our desires in the way we structure our desires because of the rise of profilicity. So that is not a traditional Marxist approach, which looks at the economy and the mode of production as the base structure. In a way, we look at them as the identity technology at the base structure, but I wouldn't really like to use this “base structure, super-structure” model.

My other influence that you mentioned already is the social theory of Niklas Luhmann, the German social theorist. He also had a big theory, just as big and complex as Marxist theory. And that was a major influence on me in particular rather than Paul, he has a different background. For instance, the influence of Trilling came from Paul. So, yes, I have more of a systemic, organic understanding of how society works. That there is no such thing as a base and super-structure, and that there's no such thing as a "center". Politics and the economy continuously influence one another in an interconnected, organic way—similar to how the human body functions. The traditional idea that a single organ, like the brain, controls everything isn't entirely accurate. Instead, the body consists of different systems that coexist and interact, each forming part of a larger whole. No system is at the top, bottom, center, or periphery—they all influence one another simultaneously.

Likewise, identity technologies operate within economic, political, and social environments. These environments are not separate but constantly shape and influence one another in a dynamic, ongoing process and mutually evolving. So the social view of Luhmann that I share is more of an evolutionary Darwinian view of society, rather than a traditional Marxist framework.

Garrido: That's very interesting. I think that part of where you're getting there is more akin to a good interpretation of Marxism, thinking in a kind of relationality that is guided not by one-sided cause-and-effect but instead by a form of reciprocity. That's consistent with the 1890s letters from Engels. The people who Marx and Engels said weren't Marxist were those who held that linear, cause-and-effect relationship. All they see is "cause there, effect there", and not reciprocity.

I do agree that there's a sort of "Marxism" that has been codified and made very orthodox that has a more linear and one-sided reading of how society functions and that takes too literally the spatial metaphor of base and superstructure, which is only ever employed once by Marx.

The third question I wanted to ask you is the following. You, along with Slavoj Žižek, Susan Neiman, et. al., have been one of the most outspoken leftist philosophers critical of wokeism. As someone who directs a Marxist Institute that has tried to spread your leftist critiques of wokeism far and wide in the U.S., I must say, it has truly helped people come to see the political bankruptcy of this civil religion. With the rise of non-woke lefts in the West, it seems that wokeism might be on its way out. Capitalist ideology, I think, will probably

have to take on a new form. Do you think we are witnessing the tail end of wokeism? Or do you think it still has the strength to throw a few punches and get back in the game?

Moeller: That's also a very good and very important question. I do feel that wokeism is on its way out. It's run its course. And on the one hand, I do think that is a good thing. But yes, I'm not sure that the larger civil religion is on its way out. And I'm not sure that therefore what is replacing woke ism is better than wokeism. I'm afraid it might be the other way around actually.

You rightly said Žižek is on the one hand critical of wokeism but on the other hand he's also kind of woke to an extent. My main hypothesis is that wokeism and Jordan Petersonism are two different denominations of the same civil religion, which in Peterson's terminology is the civil religion of the sovereign individual… which leads us back to the authenticity thing.

So this belief is basically a left wing and right wing individualist identitarianism that focuses on the sovereign individual. It's now the case that the one side of this schism is triumphing over the other but they're both equally problematic. So what I tried to do with my videos on YouTube was basically to break out of this schism. For me wokeism always reminds me, even though I wasn't around at the time, of early modernity and the religious wars at that time when we saw the rise of Protestantism. It's of course not a completely exact comparison, but you can somewhat compare Protestantism with wokeism. Wokeism also has this kind of puritanical aspect to it, somehow very Protestant in taste. And the older, more conservative version is Peterson, the Catholicism, right?

In the present day we are somewhat seeing the counter-revolution of the conservative side and Protestantism is now on the retreat, more or less. I grew up in a time that was deeply shaped by historical shifts—even before I went to China. I'm old enough to remember not just real communism, which I experienced firsthand for a significant part of my life, but also the tail end of the hippie era. By the time I was growing up, the hippie movement was fading out, but its influence was still present—especially in terms of sexual liberation and cultural openness.

For people of my generation—including many of my friends—this makes the rise of modern puritanism feel quite shocking. Žižek, who is from the same generation, has made similar observations… how we have felt that this is such a repressive kind of reversal of what had already been achieved in the 1970s and

80s. For example, as a German myself looking at the Green Party, it is exactly the same evolution. It came out of the 1960s, 1970s student revolutions and so forth and it was very pacifist, and anti-nuclear power. As of today, they've turned into the most militarist, most bourgeois, most moralistic political force.

So the Green Party represents this turnaround of wokeism in Germany which is kind of shocking for me personally and biographically to witness. On the one hand, I think that is more or less coming to an end, and I'm happy it is coming to its end, but I'm not very optimistic that what is replacing it is in any way better.

Garrido: I couldn't agree more. Following your work, we see it as a sort of spurious dialectic that's at play there, and what we've tried to tell our comrades is that we have to be both anti-woke, but anti-anti-woke.

In recent years you have developed the concept of "pariahs" to describe the outcasts, either individuals or whole states, which the media narratives spin as wholly evil and untouchable. I have found this framework extremely interesting and complementary to the work that I've done on the purity fetish, which critiques a worldview where people only seek to support or work with those parties, struggles, or individuals that perfectly align with the abstract ideas that they hold in their heads. Those that fail to live up to this become pariahs and contaminate all who they touch. Do you see the mechanisms behind pariah-making and the purity fetish as fundamentally the same, or are there key distinctions in how they operate? How do you think this dynamic shapes political discourse and social movements today?

Moeller: That's also a very good question. Thank you for that. I do think there is a parallel that you point out. I'm also very worried about this "Pariahism" but since you asked me, I will talk about how I came up with this idea. Again, it has the same influences. On the one hand, my rejection of this "Pariah" mechanism is grounded in my reading of Taoism, because Taoism is very much against the distinctions of good and evil. I wrote a book many years ago called *The Moral Fool*, which is also a Taoist book against these kinds of moralistic, good and evil distinctions.

So that is something I've been interested in for a long time. I see moralistic good and evil distinctions as a grave pathology, psychologically and socially. I think that is at the heart of Taoism. You can see it in other thinkers in the West, for instance Nietzsche, very strongly. I'm just teaching *Beyond Good and Evil*. And I believe the parallel between Nietzsche and Taoism is that they are both

basically coming up with diagnoses of these pathologies. That's how I read both Taoism and Nietzsche. These pathologies are both psychological and social and one of the greatest pathologies is this tendency to eventually end up in this kind of “Pariah mode” where you make this very strong distinction between good and evil. According to both Taoism and Nietzsche, they basically say that through this mode, you're creating that evil in the first place.

Biographically speaking, if I go back to the late 1970s—I was born in the '60s but grew up as a pre-teen in the '70s and a teenager in the '80s—it was still a time of large-scale peace demonstrations. In fact, the first protest I ever attended was one of these demonstrations. I didn't like it, but that was the spirit of the time. It was very much a pacifist time. And this era of politics was called “Entspannungspolitik” in German, or “détent policy”, and we had these communist leaders such as Brezhnev coming to Germany, so it was a completely different spirit at that time. Since that era, the culture has almost totally reversed, which has been very shocking for me.

One very surprising thing about the woke movement is that it very much works on the basis of this “Pariah Mode”. We see this with the whole cancel culture phenomenon as well. In my own life, and I practiced this until today, it's very important that I have not just talked to but have good friends who have very different opinions. This is what I do. For example, I have friends who are religious people, or people who have different political views, or have no political views at all, that think that politics is somehow stupid. But the whole “Pariah Mode” is toxic on an individual level. That's what it is. And it is toxic now as we see politically. So I follow this, as everyone did, I guess, these political developments of the past 10 or 20 years. And I saw that this “Pariah Mode” also crept into politics more and more and was used as a political model.

Of course you have this everywhere, not just in America, but also in Europe. And again, that was like a complete reversal. When I grew up in the 1980s and went to China, China was great, right? Russia was great and people wanted to go there. That was the general attitude. Then I witnessed over the years how this kind of completely reversed and became very, very toxic. And now China and Russia are the “great evils”, and we're at the brink of the Third World War. This may be a little bit of a turning point, the multi-polarity, right? Which is what the Chinese wanted, and also the Russians wanted– a multipolar approach to politics. But if you operate within the “Pariah” principle, of course, multi-polarity is an “evil thing”. And that's why we have this kind of return of the vocabulary that appeasement is a bad thing.

Then again, like the old 1970s and 1980s, the idea was we have to engage in this d**é**tente, in this *Entspannungspolitik*, particularly given the fact that we're dealing with nuclear powers, right? And that is very different from why appeasement is regarded as a bad thing, because that refers to 1938, Hitler's Munich, right? Hitler didn't have a nuclear weapon. And so you can say appeasement didn't work, but again, the times today are different.

And it's not the same historical situation. And so, I do not share this critique or this rejection of the appeasement approach. I think appeasement has to be reinvented in a different form. And it's not being reinvented as long as we stick to the "Pariah" principle, because the "Pariah" principle basically rejects any form of appeasement.

Garrido: Excellent. The final question I have for you is, as a fellow philosophy professor who does quite a bit of his work in a public arena, I very much appreciate the role that you are playing in promoting what some might call public philosophy. What do you think is the importance of philosophy, or philosophers, stepping outside of the academy to situate their work in a public setting, and for a public audience? Do you think that our discipline will continue being enchained within the cave of the academy, or will this seeming trend toward making philosophy public again continue to develop?

Moeller: That's also a very good question, Carlos, and also something I've been thinking about a lot. Sorry, I'm talking so much about my own life, but all the questions are related to my own biographical experience. Another thing that I experienced in the course of my life was the development of what I call the "academic industry". When I was a student in Germany, the academic industry did not exist. People were studying forever. They didn't have exams. They were not interested in which university they were studying. They were not even looking towards a degree or anything, and of course the universities were free. They were all public universities and you didn't pay tuition fees. You were working or doing your own stuff, and then you were at the same time somehow a student.

Of course there were material concerns, but it was not the academic industry as it is now the global model today. And that also meant when I studied philosophy, what the philosophers were doing, they were presenting their own philosophy. That was what a philosopher did in the lecture. And the idea was that in order to become a philosophy professor, you have to be a philosopher, not someone who writes papers. You didn't even have to publish books. You

actually had to be a philosopher who goes into a lecture hall and then stands there in front of, I don't know, three, four, five hundred people in these old lecture halls at Bonn University, in buildings which were built like in the 18th, 19th century, right? And that was how philosophy was being done. It was in a way a very old-fashioned public philosophy because everyone could go there.

And as I said, hundreds of people would go there. There were no exams, no degree. You would just listen to a philosopher speak about their philosophy, which was very difficult. So there was not the idea that you have to address students, on the contrary. The more esoteric you are, the higher your kind of reputation is, right? So there wasn't the idea that you have to make students understand something. Anyway, that was very good. And then of course you see this kind of complete shift and the American way of doing academics took over.

And then I had to then also try to get a job and then it got worse, increasingly worse. You had to write all these papers and then you had to go through this kind of peer review process, which didn't exist at the time as well. These are all new inventions. You can explain it best with Luhmann, I suppose. It's kind of this self-generating auto-poetic system, what I call the “academic industry”. And that develops its own code, its own functioning, its own organizations. As I said, a very good example is the peer review process.

It's very much like a power base, so it's very complex. So, to finally answer your question, I think that's very bad for philosophy. It doesn't fit what philosophers are doing or have been doing. Even in the 20s and 19th century, the most interesting philosophers from Marx, to Nietzsche, to Wittgenstein or whoever, even Sartre or Derrida– they were not professional philosophers, especially not in the way that philosophers are now professional philosophers. And if you go further back in history, of course, no one was a philosopher like that, it just didn't exist. So academic philosophy, I think it is now regarded as the way of doing it, but as a matter of fact, it's rather odd. So philosophy has never been done in that way, not even 30 years ago. That is completely ridiculous. I think, in a way, it's almost a perversion to do philosophy in this way. And I'm glad that by coincidence, I had the chance to do this channel (Carefree Wandering) and I got much more resonance there anyways, than within the academic industry.

And yeah, I do think that this is the “more natural” way of doing philosophy on YouTube and by other means. Even the debate between Žižek and Peterson,

just as a method of doing philosophy… I don't think it was a great debate but that doesn't matter. It's still better than in the normal academic papers that people are supposed to read. The academic sphere is a lot of stress. It's a lot of exploitation, actually. It has become an academic industry that is extremely exploitative. It forces a lot of young people into this and that's why I basically cannot in good conscience advise my students to pursue an academic career. I mean they have very little other options, but it is very problematic, very problematic.

Garrido: Yes, I completely agree, and I really appreciate that context of the last 30 years because I was thinking in the question about a more historical grounding of philosophy, because within my history of philosophy classes I always start with Plato's *Apology*. And I do that to try to get them to get a sense of what the spirit of philosophy is. And then I contrast it a little bit with what it's become. But you're absolutely right, even just 30 years ago It was nothing like it is now and that's unfortunate, but I think it's interesting because even the people that are in charge of the structures and counseling students, they all recognize it. And they say this is all bullshit but we kind of have to do this bullshit to get a job.

5

Why Class Still Matters: Vivek Chibber on Marxism and the Left

Vivek Chibber [1]

Interview conducted by Jonathan Brown[2]

Vivek Chibber is one of the most prominent Marxist sociologists in the United States today. A professor at New York University, Chibber has been a leading critic of dominant trends in contemporary sociology, including postcolonial theory and culturalist explanations of class. His work rigorously defends the centrality of class analysis, emphasizing the material constraints that shape working-class life in capitalist societies. Chibber is also the founding editor of *Catalyst: A Journal of Theory and Strategy*, a publication dedicated to reviving a class-centered, materialist approach to sociological analysis.

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1. Vivek Chibber is a professor of sociology at New York University. He is the editor of *Catalyst: A Journal of Theory and Strategy*. He is the author of many books, including, *Confronting Capitalism (2022)*, The *Class Matrix (2022)*, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital (2013)*, and more.

2. Jonathan Brown is an educator based in Athens, Georgia, where he teaches high school social studies, specializing in history and economics. Outside the classroom, he is an active member of the Georgia chapter of the American Communist Party and a committed advocate for socialist education. He also co-hosts *The Praxis Report*, a podcast focused on revolutionary theory.

Chibber's most recent work is *The Class Matrix: Social Theory After the Cultural Turn* (2022). In this book, Chibber takes on the dominant tendency in academia to reject materialist explanations of class struggle in favor of culturalist and identity-based frameworks. He argues that capitalism disciplines workers primarily through economic constraints, rather than through cultural hegemony, challenging widespread assumptions of mainstream sociology.

In this interview, conducted exclusively for *Red America*, Chibber discusses the themes of *The Class Matrix*, the current state of class struggle in the U.S., and the strategic directions for the socialist left. Chibber explores the failures of contemporary academic sociology, the persistence of class as the fundamental structuring force of capitalism, and the challenges facing the left in rebuilding a class-based political movement today.

Red America: In mainstream academic sociology, class is often conceptualized as a matter of socioeconomic status – determined by income, occupation, and educational attainment. This perspective tends to focus on gradational inequalities rather than antagonistic relationships. In contrast, the Marxist tradition defines class as more of a structural position, rooted in exploitation and in a relationship to the means of production.

How do you define class in your book, *The Class Matrix*?

Vivek Chibber: My conceptualization of class is a pretty conventional Marxist conception, where, as you described it, class is not rooted in the income that you get, but rather in what you have to do to attain that income. Class is the structural compulsions which force people to undertake economic strategies of a particular kind. Now, of course, that does result in inequality, but the key here is that inequality is the result of class, whereas in mainstream sociology, class is the result of inequality.

So when you look at mainstream literature on economic stratification, people are slotted into different classes by virtue of the income that they attain. So if you're poor, you're in the lower-class. If you make a little more money, you're in the middle-class. And if you make a lot more money, you're in the upper-class. The causal arrow goes from money to class. In Marxist theory, that causal arrow is reversed: it is not income inequality that causes class, but rather class that causes income inequality.

In other words, class is the result of a certain kind of inequality – not an inequality of income but an inequality of assets. Now, an "asset" simply refers

to the means of production. An unequal distribution of the means of production generates class relations by virtue of one group of people monopolizing control over the means of production, putting them in a position to extract labor from the rest of the working people in society. Because they are in a position to extract the labor of others, they are in a position to acquire greater income, which is a consequence of the fact that they own the means of production. So class relations, therefore, are relations that generate inequalities of income.

Class relations also generate inequalities of interpersonal power. And what the ruling class is able to do by virtue of its monopolization of the means of production is impose its power over workers to get them to work at a certain pace, for a certain wage, and on certain terms. But workers resent that. They resent both the coercion that they have to put up with in the workplace, and they resent the unequal distribution of income. This generates an antagonism. This antagonism comes from exploitation, and exploitation is made possible because of the unequal distribution of the means of production. So in Marxian theory, the whole process starts with the unequal distribution of the means of production, which enables a process of exploitation and through that comes income inequality, which then generates the antagonism that is the fount of the class struggle.

Red America: In *The Class Matrix*, you argue that class remains the fundamental structuring force in capitalist society, yet much of contemporary sociological theory has shifted toward cultural explanations of power and oppression. What do you see as the main reason for this cultural turn among intellectuals? And why do so many left-wing scholars resist centering economic structures in their analysis?

Vivek Chibber: The reasons for the cultural turn are both intellectual and sociological.

Intellectually, the cultural turn was based on what I consider an analytical mistake—not one coming from the mainstream, but from left-wing intellectuals themselves. The argument they developed went something like this: If workers are not spontaneously organizing to resist and overthrow capitalism, there must be some mediating factor blocking their ability to recognize their own interests. They believed that traditional Marxist theory had assumed that workers, simply by virtue of being exploited, would automatically develop class consciousness and engage in collective action. But when left-wing intellectuals observed that large-scale collective action was not happening, they sought an explanation.

The answer they arrived at was that workers were somehow failing to understand their own situation. This misunderstanding was labeled “false consciousness.” That is, workers knew they were being oppressed, but they had a distorted understanding of how to resist or what their true interests were. To explain this, left-wing intellectuals argued that capitalist ideology and culture—disseminated through institutions such as the media, schools, and churches—were the primary mechanisms preventing workers from developing class consciousness. In order to understand class struggle, they concluded, one had to study ideology and culture as the mediating forces that shaped workers' consciousness. This is what opened the door to the idea that political contestation in capitalism is primarily a cultural struggle rather than a material one.

The problem with this argument is that it assumes workers are suffering from some kind of catastrophic cognitive failure. Workers experience exploitation on a daily basis—whether it’s being bossed around, facing job insecurity, or struggling with low wages. Are we really supposed to believe that they don’t grasp the reality of their own situation? This interpretation treats workers as dupes, manipulated by ideology into submission.

What I argue in *The Class Matrix* is that workers do, in fact, rationally understand their situation. They are not simply fooled by ideology. The real issue is that workers make a strategic choice about how to resist their exploitation. More often than not, they choose individual forms of resistance over collective action because individual resistance carries fewer risks. Unionizing, going on strike, or organizing politically exposes them to retaliation—being fired, blacklisted, or facing employer repression. But engaging in everyday acts of defiance—slowing down work, calling in sick, or even just mentally checking out—is much less risky. Workers weigh these risks and act accordingly. The assumption that they are simply brainwashed by capitalist culture ignores the real material constraints that shape their behavior.

So the intellectual basis for the cultural turn rests on a fundamental analytical error—the mistaken belief that the absence of collective action means workers don’t understand their exploitation, rather than recognizing that workers are making strategic choices under conditions of constraint.

But this cultural turn wasn’t just the result of an analytical mistake. There are also sociological reasons why it took hold.

In the 1940s and 50s, many intellectuals came to the left through the gravitational pull of the labor movement and the Communist Party. Because of this connection, their research was more directly focused on class struggle. However, as the labor movement became more domesticated into capitalist institutions in the postwar years, the relationship between left intellectuals and the working class weakened. By the 1980s, labor unions had been systematically weakened, socialist and communist parties had largely disappeared from the U.S. political landscape, and left-wing intellectuals found themselves housed almost entirely in universities rather than in political movements.

This had two effects. First, it increased the distance between intellectuals and the working class, which made them more prone to adopting perspectives that emphasized cultural explanations over economic structures. Second, it led to a kind of pessimism about social change—many intellectuals no longer believed that materialist analysis could explain the world or that class struggle was a viable force for transformation. This resulted in what some have called a "flight to culture"—a retreat into cultural analysis as the dominant framework for understanding oppression and power.

And there's another factor that reinforced this shift: career incentives. By the 1980s and 90s, it became much easier to advance in mainstream academia by engaging in cultural analysis rather than insisting on a materialist approach. With the decline of mass movements and working-class politics, the moral imperative to produce research that served working-class struggles gave way to the professional incentives of academic careerism. Many left-wing intellectuals followed the cultural turn not because materialist analysis failed, but because materialism was no longer institutionally rewarded.

This, I think, explains both the rise of the cultural turn and the resistance to materialist analysis that persists among left-wing academics today.

Red America: How has this cultural turn affected political movements in the United States? What are some ways that it has impacted our ability to develop a coherent socialist politics?

Vivek Chibber: The short answer is that it has been catastrophic. Insofar as intellectual trends can be beneficial or harmful to political organizing, the cultural turn has been about as destructive as one can imagine—particularly for the labor movement.

To organize workers, you need a materialist framework, because a materialist framework is rooted in the concept of interests. It recognizes that workers have real, objective interests that unify them as a class. But if you abandon this perspective, the only basis left for organizing becomes opinions, attitudes, and cultural values.

The problem is that attitudes and opinions are fluid—they shift constantly. If you organize solely based on shared cultural views rather than shared material conditions, you become a prisoner of the moment. More importantly, you lose sight of the fact that the fundamental antagonism in capitalism is not based on culture—it is based on class interests. Capital and labor are locked in structural opposition regardless of workers' personal beliefs or ideological positions.

A materialist approach means you organize workers because of their objective position in the economy, not because they already hold the "correct" opinions. Socialist organizing has historically never required workers to pass an ideological litmus test. You don't ask them to fill out a questionnaire to determine whether they are worthy of being organized. You go to them because they are workers. And if they don't hold progressive views, you engage with them, you work with them, and you try to win them over through struggle.

The culturalist approach, however, reverses this. Instead of organizing workers as a class, the left today seeks out pre-formed groups and coalitions that already hold the right cultural or ideological views. This shifts the focus away from class struggle and toward identity-based constituencies that align with a particular worldview. While this might work in the context of electoral campaigns—where broad coalition-building is important—it is completely inadequate as a foundation for long-term socialist strategy.

Beyond its impact on organizing, the cultural turn has also fostered a deeply paternalistic attitude toward workers. Its core assumption is that capitalist culture is so powerful that it completely overrides workers' own rational understanding of their circumstances. But if workers are so deeply misled, where does the "correct" understanding of their situation come from? Not from their own experiences, but from intellectuals, activists, and highly educated elites.

This is a fundamental break from the socialist tradition. Historically, the socialist left immersed itself in working-class realities, seeing workers as the agents of their own liberation. It was the role of intellectuals to learn from

workers, not to lecture them. The culturalist left, by contrast, insists that workers must first educate themselves into a worldview that they are assumed not to understand. Instead of working-class self-emancipation, this approach creates a paternalistic dynamic where intellectuals dictate the terms of political engagement. It is a recipe for alienation and failure, and we are now sadly witnessing the fruits of that failure in real time.

Red America: For many years, academic sociologists have argued that workers in the West have remained passive not because of direct economic pressure but due to the influence of cultural hegemony. According to this view, workers are not simply coerced but are subtly conditioned to identify with capitalist values, which prevents them from recognizing their own class interests and engaging in collective action. However, you argue that capitalism disciplines workers primarily through material constraints—through economic coercion and workplace discipline—rather than cultural hegemony. Can you expand on how this coercion operates in practice and why it remains the key mechanism for maintaining class domination?

Vivek Chibber: I wouldn't use the word coercion; I would use the word compulsion—and here's the difference. Coercion is something that is exercised interpersonally—it is what one person or group does to another. Compulsion, on the other hand, describes a situation in which a person recognizes that they have no real choice, not because someone is directly forcing them, but because their circumstances leave them with no viable alternative.

Now, it's true that the overall system that generates this lack of choice is maintained through coercive structures—through the state, laws, and economic institutions—but the key thing is that this coercion is in the background. It is not being exercised directly, through interpersonal relations.

In capitalism, workers willingly submit to their situation—not because someone is holding a gun to their head, not because they are being physically forced into the workplace, and not because they are under constant surveillance. They submit because the system is structured in such a way that their only alternative to exploitation is destitution. Capitalism's brilliance is that exploiters don't need to send armed enforcers to round up workers and drag them into factories or offices. They can simply sit back and wait—because the system itself ensures that workers must come to them. And once workers arrive, we don't describe them as being coerced into labor; we describe them as being compelled by their material circumstances.

Now, what happens once workers are in the workplace? Here, some interpersonal coercion does come into play—this is the role of management. Employers and supervisors use coercion to control the workforce, dictating the intensity, pace, and conditions of labor. But—and this is crucial—managers do not create exploitation. Exploitation is already guaranteed the moment workers walk through the door. Managers simply shape the intensity and form of that exploitation.

So what keeps workers in place? The fear of job loss.

First, the fear of unemployment brings them to the workplace. Then, once they are there, the fear of losing their job keeps them from leaving. These two fears are what enable exploitation. To generate surplus labor, a worker must first be available for exploitation, and then they must continue to provide that surplus labor. Both of these conditions are created by capitalism itself—not by direct coercion.

Now, this raises a final question: If workers experience exploitation daily, why don't they collectively overthrow the system? The answer, as I argue in *The Class Matrix*, lies in the brute facts of collective action. Collective struggle is difficult, risky, and often costly. Organizing on a mass scale requires significant sacrifices, and workers know that if they fail, they may end up worse off—losing their jobs, facing blacklisting, or suffering employer retaliation.

Because of these risks, workers rationally choose individual resistance over collective resistance whenever possible. They might slow down production, cut corners, or find ways to exert control over their immediate conditions—but they stop short of open confrontation. From their perspective, it is preferable to keep a bad job than to risk losing that job entirely. Collective action might bring gains, but it also brings significant risks—so individual survival strategies become the default.

When we put all of this together, we see that workers' passivity is not due to ideology or cultural hegemony. It is not because they are brainwashed or suffering from false consciousness. Nor is it because they are being directly coerced. It is because they rationally recognize that unless they accept choices they loathe, they will be left with choices that are even worse. Their submission is not a result of confusion—it is a resigned adaptation to their material constraints.

6

The German Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist): Analysis of the Soviet Downfall and Its Proposed Solution

Toby Terrar[1]

This article summarizes and updates the scholarship done by a writing collective of the former German Communist Party (Marxist-Leninist), abbreviation KPD(ML), concerning the Soviet downfall. This is motivated by the fact that their two main works on the problem have recently been translated and made available to the English-speaking world by Red Star Publishers. Their titles are *When and Why Socialism in the Soviet Union Failed* and *Does*

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Socialism Have a Future?[2] The German-language versions were published in 1996 and 1998 respectively.[3]

By way of background, the KPD(ML) was established in 1968 by former members of the German Communist Party (KPD), which the West German government had shut down in 1956. The new group upheld the legacy of Stalin, Mao Zedong and later Hoxha. It dissolved in 1986 but former members continued to publish its newspaper, *Roter Morgen* (Red Dawn) until 2011.[4]

Like the KPD(ML)'s *When and Why*, this article presents the analysis in historical-chronological order starting in the pre-World War II era with the October 1917 Revolution and NEP (1922-1928), and then the collectivization (1927-1933) and industrialization (1929-1941). The pre-World War II period includes discussion of the Stalinist era problems and the revolutionizing of the relations of production, meaning working class control, as a solution to the problems. The second half of the book takes up the post-Stalinist failure.

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2. KPD(ML)-Roter Morgen Writers' Collective, (George Gruenthal, translator), *When and Why Socialism in the Soviet Union Failed* (New York: Red Star Publishers, 2020), 217 pp., available as a paperback and also on line as a free download at https://www.redstarpublishers.org/BookEnglishwCRbook.pdf; and *Does Socialism Have a Future*: *A Controversial Discussion about Socialism* (New York: Red Star Publishers, 2020), 99 pp., available online as a free down load at https://redstarpublishers.org/Band2Eng.pdf.

3. The German language reference to the first volume is Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands/Marxisten-Leninisten, KPD(ML) Schriftstellerkollektiv, *Wann und warum der Sozialismus in der Sowjetunion scheiterte* [When and Why Socialism in the Soviet Union Failed] (Stuttgart: Roter Morgen / (Hat der Sozialismus Zukunft?; Bd. 1.) [Does socialism have a future?; vol. 1.)] /Rote Reihe (Zeitungsverlag Roter Morgen [Red series (newspaper publisher Roter Morgen)], (1996), 204 p.; ISBN: 3928666215, OCLC: 38095885; online at https://www.redstarpublishers.org/BookGerman.pdf [hereafter KPD(ML), *When and Why*]. The first volume was made from essays published in 1995 in the *Roter Morgen* (Red Morning) newspaper.
The reference to the second volume is Peter Urban, Heiner Karuscheit, Kurt Gossweiler, Alfred Schröder, Robert Steigerwald, *Hat der Sozialismus Zukunft? Band 2 Eine kontroverse Diskussion über den Sozialismus. Dokumentation des Seminars über das Buch "Wann und warum der Sozialismus in der Sowjetunion scheiterte"* [Does socialism have a future? Volume 2, A controversial discussion about socialism. Documentation of the seminar on the book "When and why socialism failed in the Soviet Union"], (Frankfurt: Roter Morgen, 1998), 142pp., ISBN: 3928666347**,** OCLC: 41623090 [hereafter: KPD(ML), vol. 2].

4. Heiner Karuscheit, *Zur Geschichte der westdeutschen ML Bewegung* (On the history of the West German ML movement) (Gelsenkirchen: Im Selbstverlag [self-published], 1978.), LCCN: 82148586, 190 p.; Alfred Schröder and Heiner Karuscheit, *Deus ex machin: oder, Wie die KPD/ML zu einem Programm kam* (Deus ex machina: or, How the KPD/ML came to a program) (Gelsenkirchen: A. Schröder, Selbstverlag [self-published], 1977), LCCN: 77481872, 82 p.; Herbert Polifka (trans.), "New Revelations about the Activities and Destruction of the GDR Section of the Communist Party of Germany/Marxist-Leninist (KPD/ML)" in *Revolutionary Democracy* (New Delhi), April 1999, vol. 5, no. 1 (OCLC: 47352853), online at https://revolutionarydemocracy.org/rdv5n1/gdrkpd.htm; originally published in *Roter Morgen*, no. 24 (December, 1997), and no. 1, no.2 (January 21 and February 5, 1998). See also, Anonymous, "Communist Party of Germany/Marxists–Leninists," *Wikipedia*

Among the studies of the Soviet failure, the KPD(ML) tends toward being unique in its detailed analysis of the class forces in the pre-World War era. Studies by those associated with other parties focus largely on the post-Stalin era. A leader in such studies is the Communist Party of China.[5] It stated that it does not want a repeat of the Soviet experience. As General Secretary Xi Jinping commented, the Soviets seized power when it had 200,000 party members, defeated Hitler when it had 2 million members, and lost power when it had 20 million members.[6] The Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) has studied its fall.[7] The smaller parties have done likewise, including the Communist Party of Greece, the Communist Party, USA and others.[8]

In terms of theory, *When and Why* seeks to improve on what the Germans, following Lenin, called "the theory of the transitional society to communism," as illustrated by the Soviet experience.[9] Along the same lines, Marx had called

5. See for example, Li Shenming, "The Degeneration of the Soviet Communist Party was the Fundamental Reason for the Collapse of the USSR," *International Critical Thought* (Aug. 2011), vol. 1, pp. 171-185; and Zuo Fengrong, "A Review of Chinese Scholarship on the Collapse of the Soviet Union," *Interpret: China* (February 5, 2022), online at https://interpret.csis.org/translations/a-review-of-chinese-scholarship-on-the-collapse-of-the-soviet-union/. This latter article summarizes the work of multiple Chinese scholars who write about the Soviet fall, but none are translated to English.

6. Xi Jinping, "Speech to Central Committee members and leading cadres," (2018), quoted in Jonathon P. Sine, "The Cold Wind of Historical Nihilism: Lessons from Chinese Communist Party documentaries on the fall of the Soviet Union," *Cogitations* (Dec. 2, 2022), online at https://jonathonpsine.substack.com/p/the-cold-wind-of-history.

7. Richard Kosolapov (1930-2020), *Istina iz Rossii* (Truth from Russia) (Истина из России) (Tver, Russia: Severnaja Korona, 2004), 665 pages; OCLC: 60777327 (not translated to English).

8. Communist Party of Greece Central Committee, "Assessments and conclusions from socialist construction in the 20th century focusing on the USSR: The KKE's conception of socialism," in *Decision of the 18th Congress of the KKE* (Athens: Mar 2009), 63 pp; in Greek, online at https://www.kke.gr/article/Apofasi-toy-18oy-Synedrioy-toy-KKE-gia-to-Sosialismo; Vijay Singh, "Stalin and the Question of 'Market Socialism' in the Soviet Union after the Second World War," *Revolutionary Democracy* (New Delhi, India: *ICMLPO*, April 1995), vol. 1, no. 1; online at https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/; Roger Keeran and Thomas Kenny, *Socialism Betrayed: Beyond the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (New York: International Publishers, 2004) (deviation from M-L the problem); Grover Furr, *Khrushchev lied: the evidence that every "revelation"… to the 20th party congress… is false* (Kettering, Ohio: Erythro's Press and Media, 2011), OCLC 706495948, 426 pp.; Bahman Azad, *Heroic Struggle, Bitter Defeat: Factors Contributing to the Dismantling of the Socialist State in the Soviet Union* (New York: International Publishers, 2000), 187 pp., LCCN 00040729; Erwin Marquit, "The Need for a Balanced Reappraisal of the USSR – Review Essay," *Nature, Society and Thought* (2004), vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 473-506 (bureaucracy the problem); David Laibman, "The Soviet Demise: Revisionist Betrayal, Structural Deficit, or Authoritarian Distortion?", *Science & Society* (October 2005), vol. 69, pp. 594-606 (authoritarianism the problem).

9. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 189.

the transition period the first or lower phase or stage of communist society.[10] The KPD(ML) summarized the nature of the lower phase:

> *Socialism is also not an independent socio-economic formation. It is a society between capitalism, whose relations of production contain elements of the old society, as well as of communism, and consequently it can develop both forwards toward communism or backwards toward capitalism.*[11]

The reason the Germans studied the Soviets was that they believed it would help toward future progress. The book states:

> *Before socialism can once again become a perspective for the millions, it is necessary to take stock soberly, to thoroughly evaluate the historical experiences. The present book on the development of the Soviet Union is intended as one contribution to this.*[12]

It can be added that the intent of the Germans was to produce in the first volume a study for fellow communists who wanted a Marxist-Leninist view on the Soviet fall. There was no discussion of non-Marxist-Leninist theories. But the second volume was a compilation of papers delivered at a conference called to discuss the first volume. That conference was open to those not connected with the KPD(ML), including those who held to what the Germans called "the old philistine wisdom of the alleged impossibility of communism."[13] The second volume included papers by Robert Steigerwald and Heiner Karuscheit - Alfred Schroder, who were non-KPD(ML).

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10. Vladimir Lenin, (1870-1924), *The state and revolution: the Marxist teaching on the state and the tasks of the proletariat in the revolution* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1949), 174 pp., chapter 5 (the first phase of Communist Society), LCCN 50031267; online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch05.htm.
11. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 189.
12. *Ibid*., p. 11.
13. KPD(ML), vol. 2, p. 17.

Positive View about the Soviets: October 1917 Revolution and NEP (1922-1928) .

Among the reasons the KPD(ML) gave for its positive view of the USSR as a socialist country were first, the Bolsheviks had answered in 1917 the demands of the workers and peasants for peace, bread and land. Fifteen million people had died in the inter-capitalist World War I (1914-1918). They also had defeated, at a cost of five million lives, the military forces of the capitalists, kulaks and foreign imperialists during the Russian Civil War.

During the period of war communism (June 1918 to March 1921), the KPD(ML) saw as legitimate the alliance of the communists with the peasant class, despite the peasant rejection of communism. The capitalists could not have been defeated without the alliance. The KPD(ML) pointed out:

> *During the period of war communism, the surplus of peasant production was collected without compensation and distributed to the workers in the cities. In this context Bolsheviks were subject to the illusion that this was the beginning of communist relations. In reality, it was a stopgap measure with which the mass of the peasants agreed only because they knew very well that the large landowners would come back if the Red Army was defeated. That changed with the victory of the Red Army.*[14]

In 1921 following their civil war victory, the Soviets introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) and multiple policies associated with it, which the KPD(ML) also felt were legitimate, despite being a retreat from socialism. The country was weak and needed time to gain strength. Only 15 percent of the population was working class. Most were peasants and they and their petit bourgeois views had to be accommodated or they could have forced the communists out. The KPD(ML) stated:

> *The first and most urgent question had to be how the working class could forge an alliance with the peasants. This was anything but easy, since the class interests of the workers and the peasants in no way coincided. The Mensheviks (the opportunist wing of the workers' movement, the equivalent of Western social democracy) believed that in a backward*

14. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 33.

> *country like Russia, the working class could not take power. Correspondingly, the Trotskyists argued that if the revolution were not victorious in the Western industrialized countries, the working class could not remain in power... The majority of the Russian workers and the Bolshevik Party had a different idea. Logically, the question of the policy towards the peasants was at the center of the internal party disputes for a very long time, because this question was to be the main problem of the Russian revolution for a long time to come.*[15]

Two of the policies which the NEP required and that were in the interests of the workers were called "bourgeois crutches" by the Germans. The first crutch was the state with its ownership of the means of production and coercive forces. In a communist society there would be no state, but in a transitional society it was necessary. The state was needed to enforce the working class dictatorship over the still existing bourgeois and peasant classes. As the Germans commented:

> *The repressive functions of the Soviet state were unquestionably necessary on the whole and they were ultimately in the interest of the working class… It was a proletarian state power, for it served to realize the strategic goals of the proletariat. But looked at from this view, that it was a socialist state power, it had extremely strong bureaucratic features.*[16]

The second bourgeois crutch made use of by the Bolsheviks was commodity-money relations, the law of value, the supply and demand market economy and profit. In a communist society there would be a centralized subsistence economy, managed by instructions, based on the egalitarian principles of labor and need with no money or material incentives.[17] It was called the natural distributive system, a direct exchange of goods and services between city and countryside and between worker and industry without the intermediary of money.[18]

During the civil war in 1920, the working class's ideal of a no-money, everything-is-free society was apparently made law when, according to

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15. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
18. Aleksy Wakar, et al., *Teoria pieniądza w gospodarce socjalistycznej. Pod kierunkiem naukowym Aleksego Wakara* (Theory of money in a socialist economy) (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawn, Naukowe, 1969), 417 pp. at pp. 255, 257.

Vyacheslav Molotov's (1890-1986) memoir, Lenin signed a decree on the liquidation of money. Units of labor time replaced it, "This will cost so many hours of labor, that will cost so many." This prevented some from living at the expense of others.[19] It should be noted that, notwithstanding Molotov, the only mention of money in *Lenin's Collected Works* for 1920 is not about a decree but about repaying the peasants for the paper money they were given for grain.[20]

Whether or not there was a formal money liquidation decree, in the second half of 1920 the postal and telegraphic charges were abolished one after the other, the use of flats (apartments), telephones, water, gas and electricity was made available free of charge for workers and employees. On August 16, 1920, the tariffs for passenger and freight transport by rail and water were abolished. In principle it was decided that foodstuffs should also be supplied free of charge by the People's Commissariat for Food.[21] The International Labor Organization estimated that 90 percent of worker wages were in kind.[22] Similar measures had earlier been experienced with the state monopolistic war economy during World War I (elimination of the market, liquidation of money, general compulsion to work).[23]

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19. Feliks Chuev, *Molotov remembers: inside Kremlin politics: conversations with Felix Chuev*, ed. Albert Resis (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1993), LCCN 93011253, p. 405. KPD(ML) functionary Peter Urban in the second KPD(ML) volume, *Does socialism have a future?*, p. 9, explains how in a communist society, the "law of the economy of time" replaces the law of value.

20. Vladimir Lenin, "Report On The Work Of The Council Of People's Commissars (December 22): Eighth All-Russia Congress of Soviets (December 29, 1920)," in *Lenin's Collected Works* (4th English ed.; Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 45 vols., at vol. 31, pp. 461-534, online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/8thcong/index.htm. Lenin's biographer, Petr N. Pospelov, et al., *Vladimir Ilyich Lenin: a biography* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965) LCCN: 74476268, 589 pp. also mentions no money abolition decree. Historian Ralph Elwood in "How Complete is Lenin's *Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii* [Complete Works]?," *Slavic Review* (Mar., 1979), vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 97-105, at p. 99, points out that the *Complete Works* left out material by mistake and intentionally, as when the editors felt it would not be to Lenin's credit.

21. László Szamuely, "Major Features of the Economy and Ideology of War Communism," *Acta Oeconomica* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971), vol. 7, no. 2, pp. 143-160, at p. 148; online at https://www.jstor.org/stable/40728009.

22. I.L.O., *Industrial Life in Soviet Russia*, p. 169, quoted in Maurice Dobb, *Soviet economic development since 1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1966), LCCN 67000911, 515 pp., at p. 101. There is no International Labor Organization entry with this title in the OCLC catalogue system.

23. Nicolas Spulber, *Russia's Economic Transitions: From Tsarism to the New Millennium* (New York: Cambridge University Press, [2003] 2006), p. 176 (Imperial Germany's centralized war economy model was similar).

Among the believers in the money-less economy was Stalin.[24] A Soviet economist, Lev Kritzman (1890-1938), wrote in 1925 about the heroic nature of the moneyless "natural" economy:

> *In reality, war communism is the first experience on a large scale of a proletarian-natural economy, the experience of the first steps of the transition to socialism. In its assumptions, it was not at all a mistake of persons or classes, it was, although not in its pure form and with some distortions, an anticipation of the future, the intrusion of this future into the present.*[25]

The money liquidation gave substance to Section 15 of the Bolshevik Party's 1919 program adopted at their 8th Congress. Lenin had drafted the program, and it had looked to the permanent elimination of money. It read:

> *In the initial stage of transition from capitalism to communism, while communist production and distribution of products is not yet fully organized, it is impossible to abolish money. Under such conditions the bourgeois elements of society continue to use money, which still remains private property, for speculation, profiteering, and robbery of the workers. The RKP [Russian Communist Party], assisted by the nationalization of banks, strives toward the adoption of a series of measures which will extend the sphere of non-monetary [cashless] calculations and which will prepare the ground for the abolition of money.*[26]

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24. Wakar, et al., *Teoria pieniądza* (Theory of money), p. 275, which quotes J. Stalin, *Dzieła* (Works), (Warsaw: Książka i Wiedza, 1951), 13 vols., at vol. 11, pp. 154-155 (about the program of the Comintern). An English language summary is in Professor (at University of California, Davis) Andrzej Brzeski's (1925 – 2019), "Review of *Teoria Pieniadza w Gospodarce Socjalistycznej* by J. Beksiak, U. Libura, S. Nikołajczuk, A. Wakar and A. Wiernik" in *Journal of Economic Literature* (Nashville, Tenn.: Dec., 1970), vol. 8, no. 4 pp. 1217-1222, at p. 1220.

25. Lev Kritzman, *Героический период великой русской революции; опыт анализа т.н. "военного коммунизма"* (The heroic period of the Great Russian Revolution: experience in analyizing the so-called "war communism" (Moscow: State Publishing House, 1925), OCLC: 18892386, 250 pp. at p. 75.

26. Szamuely, "Major Features of the Economy", p. 154. The full 1919 Bolshevik program (in English) containing the quote about money is in Richard Gregor (comp.), "Programme of the RKP(b)," *The early Soviet period, 1917-1929* [Resolutions and decisions of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), LCCN 74195074, pp. 54-72 at p. 70; online at https://drive.google.com/file/d/14Q6C_f7eWSFwlvZDmYBhMfSF3rjAdjlv/view.

Looking back during the 1970s on the period of war communism, the Hungarian economist László Szamuely (b. 1936) argued that the moneyless society was the "purest realization" of a centralized directive model of planned economy yet achieved, stating, "since then not even the most rigidly centralized mechanisms have abolished monetary economy."[27] He added that the Bolsheviks saw it as a "desirable and final aim" and as "laying the foundations of socialist economy," and as having "its own established ideology."[28] About its ideology, he wrote:

> *War communism as a specific economic model in general -- and every one of its traits, in particular -- had its own theoretical background. Not for a single moment did its ideologues consider the system of war-communistic economy as temporary or at least they thought its existence was indispensable until the complete building up of socialism.*[29]

As mentioned, despite its ambitions, the working class was weak and unable to establish the necessary discipline to make the system work. Within a year of instituting the centralized-barter, moneyless command economy, the country was forced to restore the price system. At the party's March 1921 10th Congress, Lenin introduced the new NEP program, stating, "We went further than was necessary theoretically and politically."[30] Later he stated about this:

> *The transfer of state-enterprises to the so-called profit basis is inevitably and inseparably connected with the New Economic Policy… In view of the*

The 1919 program in Russian is in *Коммунистическая партия Советского Союза в резолюциях и решениях съездов, конференций и пленумов ЦК 1898-1954*. В 3-х тт [*CPSU in the resolutions and the decisions of congresses, conferences and plenary sessions of the CC*] (Part I.) (Moscow: 1954), p. 427. On Lenin's drafting of the party program, see Viktor Leonidovič Ignat'ev, "Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolshevik)," *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (1979), online at https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Eighth+Congress+of+the+Russian+Communist+Party+Bolshevik

27. Szamuely, "Major Features of the Economy", p. 149.

28. *Ibid*., pp. 143-144, 154; See also Szamuely's *First Models of the Socialist Economic Systems: Principles and Theories* (Budapest: Akademiai Kiadó), pp. 15, 17.

29. Szamuely, "Major Features of the Economy", p. 158. See also, at p. 195, note 19, for a list of Soviet textbooks (Russian language) on cashless accounting (calculation of production, measurement of labor value, economics of enterprises) that were written during the war communism period.

30. Vladimir Lenin, "Report on the Substitution of a Tax in Kind for the Surplus Grain Appropriation System (March 15)," Tenth Congress of the R.C.P.(B.) (March 8-16, 1921) in *Lenin's Collected Works*, 1st English ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), vol. 32, pp. 165-271, online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/10thcong/index.htm.

> *urgent need to increase the productivity of labor and make every state enterprise pay its way and show a profit.*[31]

At the same time, as Aleksy Wakar, director of Poland's Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw points out, in reversing moneyless system by instituting the NEP, "Lenin admitted to an error of haste, not of principle."[32] In October 1921 on the occasion of the fourth anniversary of the October Revolution, Lenin commented:

> *We hoped - or perhaps it would be more correct to say, we assumed without having sufficient grounds for this - that with the help of direct regulations of the proletarian state, we would be able to organize the production of state governments and the state division of products in a country with a small peasant economy according to communist principles. Life revealed our mistake. It turned out that a number of transition stages were necessary - state capitalism and socialism - to* prepare *for many years of work the transition to communism (Lenin's emphasis).*[33]

Collectivization (1927-1933) and Industrialization (1929-1941)

The KPD(ML) was positive about the USSR experience because of the Revolution and NEP, which were seen as steps in building socialism. Another reason the Germans viewed the Soviets with favor was its agricultural collectivization and industrialization programs.

The Germans pointed out that there was a contradiction between socialist industry, which was developing according to the laws of extended [expanded] reproduction, and the predominantly small-scale commodity agriculture, which did not always achieve even simple reproduction. Agriculture lagged behind

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31. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 53-54, quoting Lenin, "The Role and Functions of Trade Unions under the New Economic Policy," (1922), in Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1960-1970), LCCN 62000396, 46 vols., at vol. 33, pp. 185-186.

32. Wakar, *Teoria pieniądza* (Theory of money), p. 256. See also, Brzeski, "Review of *Teoria Pieniadza*," p. 1220.

33. Vladimir Lenin, "Fourth Anniversary of the October Revolution: October 14, 1921" *Collected Works*, 2nd English ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), vol. 33, pp. 51-59, online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1921/oct/14.htm, quoted by Wakar, *Teoria pieniądza* (Theory of money), p. 256.

industry and was less and less capable of meeting the growing needs of the urban population.

The KPD(ML) summarized about the agriculture problem and the necessary destruction of the landowning class:

> *In 1928-1929 the critical point was reached. A further continuation of the NEP would have led to the downfall of the workers' power. In 1929 the party under Stalin's leadership decided to set course for the destruction of the kulaks as a class and for the collectivization of agriculture. This led to an extremely intensified class struggle, not to say class war…*
>
> *As far as Soviet power was concerned, the backwardness of the village had very great disadvantages, but now the collective-traditions of the peasants turned into an advantage for socialist collectivization, the concrete form of which largely corresponded to the level of development and consciousness of the peasantry. Furthermore, there were tractors and other agricultural machines which the state made available to the collectives in the form of state Machine and Tractor Stations (MTS), so that the economic advantages of collectivization were tangible for the peasants.*[34]

In establishing the system, the collective farms were obliged, first, to deliver a certain quantity of their products to the state at a relatively low "price of acquisition". Second, they had to provide the MTS with a "payment in kind" for the use of state production instruments; these products thus flowed to the state without commodity-money relations. Third, the collectives supplied products at higher prices than the compulsory delivery price. Fourth, there were supply contracts between the collective farms and the state; the state paid contractually agreed upon prices for deliveries according to plan as well as premiums for deliveries in excess of plan.[35] Collectivization of agriculture established stratified collective farms with a white-collar decision-making elite, the field workers at the bottom and blue-collar machine operators in the middle strata.[36]

Along with the collectivization of agriculture, the Soviet industrial program, which, of necessity, included wage differentials and restraint of unions, was

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34. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 34-35.

35. *Ibid*., pp. 145-146.

36. Thomas Mayer, "The Collapse of Soviet Communism: A Class Dynamics Interpretation." *Social Forces* (March 2002), vol. 80, no. 3, pp. 759-811, at p. 805.

also viewed by the Germans as helping to build socialism. *When and Why* commented:

> *Stalin rightly demanded a differentiated wage system… There were strict penal laws against the violation of work discipline. The unions lost their independence, which had been defended by Lenin against Trotsky in 1920 in a different situation, and were subjected to the "principle of production" in 1932. Their task was now no longer to defend the economic interests of the workers against the enterprise management, but only to achieve the plans... These were all very mild means of enforcing labor discipline when compared with the means the bourgeoisie used in corresponding phases of industrialization.*[37]

In defending the industrialization program, the Germans also quoted Stalin who in 1931 accurately stated that if the Soviets did not industrialize they would be destroyed:

> *"To slacken the tempo would mean falling behind. And those who fall behind get beaten. But we do not want to be beaten. No, we refuse to be beaten!… We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall go under."*
>
> *That this was correct is particularly clear in retrospect. That goal was achieved, and one can say without exaggeration that such a development of the productive forces in such a short period of time is probably unique in world history. But one had no choice in the means of achieving this objective.*[38]

37. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 37.

38. *Ibid*., p. 39, quoting Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1952-1954), 13 vols., (v. 11. [1928]; v. 12 [1929]; v, 13 [1930-1934]) LCCN 54023357, at vol. 13, pp. 40-41; online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/02/04.htm

Stalinist Era Problems: NEP Crutches, Management System and Peasantry

As noted, the purpose of *When and Why* was to help communists learn from the USSR's problems in order to make better progress in the future. During the Stalinist era, the Soviets had three basic problem areas as discussed by the Germans. These were:

> *(A) the 1920s NEP crutches.*
> *(B) the 1930s enterprise management system and*
> *(C) the peasantry.*

(A) The bourgeois crutches, consisting of state power and commodity-money-consumerist relations, were necessary as temporary expedients but in fact became permanent.

(B) Besides the crutches, the management system that came in the 1930s with industrialization and the planned economy created four negative side-effects:

> *(I) it added a stratum that had different interests than the working class;*
> *(II) it limited working class influence;*
> *(III) it encouraged economic inequality; and*
> *(IV) it squandered the wealth of the working class.*

(B-I) More specifically, the first side-effect that came with the management system involved a stratum of managers and state planners whose interests were different from those of the working class. The interest of the planners was in plan fulfillment, not in social interests. The KPD(ML) commented:

> *These class-based forces [planners]… worked against the orientation of production towards social interests, and they too raised the flag of "accumulation for accumulation's sake". From their point of view, the purpose of production was not the profit of individual factories but the "fulfillment of the plan" in their own sphere, no matter how formally or even by embellishing this "achievement". For on the one hand, their personal prestige, privileges and careers depended largely on whether the*

> *sphere for which they were responsible was attested to "fulfilling the plan"; on the other hand, they were intoxicated with the "glory" and "splendor" of the "almighty" Soviet power, by which these people did not mean the power of the working class, but of the apparatus. They too embodied private interest, which was opposed to the social interest.*[39]

(B-II) A second side-effect that came with the management system was that the possibilities for workers to directly influence political and economic decisions was limited by the pyramid-shaped management apparatus with the Politburo of the Party at the top, which ran the economy. The KPD(ML) summarized:

> *The system of management that was inevitable at that time could only be temporary. The given relations of production were the material basis for phenomena that Stalin attacked when he deplored the fact that the masses were beginning to look up to the leaders and no longer criticized them, while the leaders were becoming arrogant and looking down on the masses.*[40]

(B-III) Added to the side-effect of limiting worker influence was a third fault of the management system. This was the emergence of huge differences in income, which the Germans maintained was also inevitable. In order to combat the problem, which started at the beginning of the NEP in the early 1920s, the party established the "party-maximum" tax. Party members agreed to a 90 percent tax that went to the party on their income above 210 rubles per month.[41] This was the wage of a worker. The tax helped keep enterprise managers, state planning bureaucrats and technicians who had higher wages from joining the party, unless they really identified with the working class.

During the industrialization and economic planning in the 1930s, however, the high-paid stratum that had no belief in communism joined the party and they forced the termination of the tax. The KPD(ML) commented:

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39. *Ibid*., p. 39, quoting Joseph Stalin (1878-1953), *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1952-1954), 13 vols., (v. 11. [1928]; v. 12 [1929]; v, 13 [1930-1934]) LCCN 54023357, at vol. 13, pp. 40-41; online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/02/04.htm

40. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 39, quoting Stalin, *Works*, vol. 11, p 34.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 23. The book cites as authority on the tax, Nils Holmberg (1902-1981), *Friedliche Konterrevolution: die Entwicklung der Sowjetunion vom Sozialismus zum Staatskapitalismus und Sozialimperialismus* (Peaceful counterrevolution: the development of the Soviet Union from socialism to state capitalism and social-imperialis (Berlin: Oberbaumverlag, 1974), OCLC 4053040, vol. 1, p. 36. Holmberg was a leader of the Communist Party of Sweden (SKP).

> *The relations of production determined the consumption relations. Those cadres who were supposed to "get down to work" and actually did so, who – depending on their position in the hierarchically structured management apparatus – often had an enormous amount of power, but as a rule had to work around the clock, these cadres also demanded a corresponding income. No wonder that the party maximum had to be dropped in the end. Once certain management structures had been established the party had to come to terms with the corresponding consumption patterns.*[42]

In the KPD(ML) analysis, the economic inequality that resulted from the management system was exacerbated not only by the wage differentials but by the abuse of the economic accounting practices. Management used the accounting system as a way to convert state funds to its own use. *When and Why* in discussing the Soviet publication, *The Textbook of Political Economy* (1954), observed about one of the accounting practices that was used to enrich management:

> *A part of this net income was "allocated to the director's fund, for material support of the staff and other purposes." That is, 1-5% of the planned net income of the enterprise and 15-45% of the profit in excess of the planned profit. From the director's fund the manager of the enterprise was allowed to pay out bonuses.*[43]

Another type of accounting abuse with a similar aim was that management forced the country to turn over to management partial ownership of the enterprises. This was done with the liquid assets of the enterprises, which flowed into the credit system and were called the "social property" of the enterprise. The KPD(ML) asked about this property:

> *Is it the property of the enterprise or of society?… The material and financial resources of the enterprise are in a sense the "property" of the*

42. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 38-39.

43. *Ibid*., p. 56. The citation to the English version of the Soviet book is Clemens P. Dutt and Andrew Rothstein (eds.), *Political Economy: A Textbook issued by the Institute of Economics the Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, [1954] 1957), LCCN 70016891; 858 pp., at Part 3B, ch. 34, p. 619. The online version is shorter with 623 pages and pertinent online are Chapter XXXIII: Wages in a Socialist Economy, pp. 444-455 and Chapter XXXIV: Economic Accounting and Profitability Costs and Price, pp. 456-470. Information about wages of enterprise directors on p. 449; see https://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/PoliticalEconomy.pdf.

> *enterprise … Society is forced to limit its ownership by giving the enterprise a certain degree of ownership.*[44]

(B-IV) From the *When and Why* perspective the enterprise managers abused the accounting system to enrich themselves and at the same time they also squandered the people's wealth with wasteful accounting practices. On this the book quoted Stalin's complaints about such abuse:

> *In a number of enterprises and business organizations concepts such as "cutting down unproductive expenditure," and "rationalization of production" have long gone out of fashion. Evidently they assume that the State Bank will advance the necessary money anyway… You know that reducing the cost of production by one per cent means an accumulation in industry of 150,000,000 to 200,000,000 rubles. Obviously to raise the cost of production under such circumstances means to deprive industry and the entire national economy of hundreds of millions of rubles… We must introduce and reinforce economic accounting in all our enterprises.*[45]

The KPD(ML) maintained that the solution to the management side-effect was the strengthening of the working class influence. Accounting solutions were not enough. This point will be taken up further in the Solution section of this essay, but *Where and Why* summarized the point as follows:

> *Neither through the mechanisms for economic accounting alone, nor through state centralism alone, nor through the combination of these two elements alone could socialism hold its own in the long run. Only the ever-increasing participation of the working masses in the management of the economy could have ensured the existence of socialism in the long run. "Economic accounting" in itself could only lead to enterprise managers increasingly acting and thinking like private owners.*[46]

(C) In addition to the NEP crutches and the management system, the peasant class was a third basic problem during the Stalinist era. The Germans pointed

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44. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 56-57.

45. *Ibid*., p. 59, quoting Stalin, "New Conditions – New Tasks in Economic Construction," *Works*, vol. 13, pp. 76-78, online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/06/23.htm

46. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 62.

out that the class interests of the peasants and the working class "in no way coincided."[47] The farmers were an exploitative class. They used public land to make private profit and live at a standard above the working class. During the period of war communism (1918-1921) they had made an alliance with the communists, despite their rejection of communism, because they knew that if the Red Army was defeated, the large landowners would come back.

The peasant exploitation in the decade following the civil war was studied by KPD(ML) functionary Peter Urban in the second KPD(ML) volume on the Soviet failure. He agreed with Stalin that the NEP had to be ended in 1928 because the capitalist policy was allowing the rich peasants to use commodity production to undermine the working class. More specifically, Urban stated that the peasants were withholding grain with the intention of obtaining higher prices and this led to supply problems in the cities. He wrote:

> *These "peasants" were precisely the kulaks (i.e., rich peasants who exploited the labor of others) as well as other peasants under their influence, and all this was not only about higher profits, but it was also a political struggle: the supply problems in the city were meant to undermine Soviet power so that it could eventually be over- thrown. . . if the Soviet power had continued the NEP indefinitely, it would have undermined its own existence, and the kulaks would have been satisfied with that. This is precisely why Bukharin's policy was counterrevolutionary.*[48]

With the end of the NEP the kulaks were liquidated. What remained in the countryside were poor and middle-sized peasants who had been allied to the communists during the NEP. In the 1930s they formed collective farms. The larger of these farms became wealthy, complete with a social stratification of white-collar decision-making elites at the top, field workers at the bottom and blue-collar machine operators in the middle strata.[49] A sector of the peasants supported communism, but from the view of the KPD(ML), the collective farms generally took up where the kulaks had left off. Eventually they became allied to the enterprise managers and supported Gorbachev in the 1980s.[50] Molotov summarized about the Bukharinist nature of the peasant class, "We are

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47. *Ibid*., p. 31.

48. KPD(ML), vol. 2, pp. 48-49.

49. Thomas Mayer, "The Collapse of Soviet Communism: A Class Dynamics Interpretation." *Social Forces* (March 2002), vol. 80, no. 3, pp. 759-811, at p. 805.

50. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 150-151; Keeran and Kenny, *Socialism Betrayed*, p. 131.

primarily a peasant country, and the right wing is powerful. Where's the guarantee to prevent them from getting the upper hand? The anti-Stalinists in all probability will come to power in the near future, and they are most likely to be Bukharinists."[51]

Because of their exploitative ways, Stalin proposed taxing the collective farms out of existence.[52] During World War II their profiteering was large enough that in 1947 the ruble had to be devalued (one new for ten old rubles) in order to prevent the peasants from monopolizing the commodity market. The circumstances of the devaluation were that the ration-card system for food and industrial goods was being replaced with a system of free sale at unified state prices. Professor Alex Inkeles commented on this in 1950:

> *Major segments of the peasantry accumulated very large sums of cash holdings during the recent war through the sale of extremely scarce food products. It was largely to prevent this money from flooding the consumers goods market that the monetary reform of 1947 was carried out.*[53]

The government's monetary attack was viewed with hostility by the peasants. One of their western academic supporters compared the devaluation to the kulak liquidation at the end of the NEP. He stated:

> *This gives the Soviet currency reform the same character of social inequality which characterizes all economic and social policy of the Soviet regime. In this respect, the new Soviet currency reform is the continuation of the same fight against the well-to-do peasants, the kulaks, which implemented the collectivization of Russian agriculture.*[54]

In addition to being an exploitative class, the farmers neglected mechanization. As a result, there was a chronic problem of food shortages. The state farms were more productive because they were industrialized. In 1973 Molotov observed:

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51. Chuev, *Molotov remembers*, p. 373.

52. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 97-98, 118-119.

53. Alex Inkeles, "Social Stratification and Mobility in the Soviet Union: 1940-1950," *American Sociological Review* (Aug., 1950), vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 465- 479, at. p. 472.

54. B. Alexandrov, "The Soviet Currency Reform," *The Russian Review* (Jan., 1949), vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 56-61, at p. 59.

> *The kolkhoz (collective farm) is a transitional, and only a transitional form. No socialism, no complete socialism exists while there are two forms of property, state and cooperative… Brezhnev, in spite of himself, is one of those leaders who doesn't understand this, one of those who live according to a vulgar, petty bourgeois ideology. We have a lot of that around in our county and it cannot but impede progress...*
>
> *Twenty years ago Stalin wrote that the kolkhozes were already beginning to block progress. Today the kolkhozes can rely on their own funds. But what if the state should invest in this matter? The rate of growth would rise phenomenally... Under-mechanization is the major reason for our agricultural problems. In America there is no shortage of grain, cotton, or sugar beets. Why? Because of complete mechanization and integration down to the smallest level. If we were able to this we would outperform them.*[55]

Stalin sought the goals of raising collective property to the higher level of public property, of replacing commodity exchange with product exchange (no money) and of taxing the farmers so that their surplus value would be shared in an egalitarian way.[56]

In discussing the USSR problems, the Germans mentioned by way of explanation, that the Soviets were the first socialist society and there was a lack of developed transition society theory to guide them. This led, in the KPD(ML)'s view, to the fact that Stalin took a subjectivist (idealist) position and did not recognize that during the 1930s a new stratum had developed and threatened to take power from the working class as a result of the state ownership and commodity economic accounting.[57]

About the theoretical problem and not sufficiently guarding against the management apparatus, the Germans commented:

> *Stalin failed to recognize a decisive point, namely that the leading stratum had developed class-based interests on the basis of which it resolutely opposed communist development… This was a glaring misjudgment of reality, because the leading stratum was about to form a new ruling class, to wrest power completely from the working class.*[58]

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55. Chuev, *Molotov remembers*, pp. 384-385.
56. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 118-119.
57. *Ibid*., p. 92.
58. *Ibid*., p. 96.

The Germans went on to stress that the idea that it was only necessary to "overcome," as Stalin put it, "those forces that did not understand the necessary changes" was idealist because this idea was abstracted from the class-based interests of the leading stratum, the high party and state functionaries as well as the enterprise managers. At that time, the majority of these leaders primarily wanted to maintain or extend their privileges, their decision-making powers and their privileges in consumption.[59]

Despite the problems and the lack of a developed transition theory, the Germans maintained that the USSR under Stalin remained a socialist country that was serving the interests of the working class.

Solution: Revolutionize Relations of Production

As noted, the intent of the KPD(ML) in studying Soviet history was to help progress toward a communist society in the future. As a result, its study included discussion of how to solve the Soviet faults. The Germans summed up their solution as revolutionizing the relations of production.[60] By this they meant withering the money-commodity relations that had been carried over from the capitalist era. This withering involved a social movement within socialism against the enterprise directors and state bureaucrats.

The KPD(ML) believed that Stalin had not dealt sufficiently with the revolutionary movement. They wrote:

> *The withering away of the state is not a mechanism that takes place on its own at a certain level of development of the productive forces or with the spread of socialism to most countries in the world. Moreover, the strengthening and development of the communist kernel within socialist society is not a mechanism – neither when there still exist foreign imperialist countries or afterwards. Communism can only be won through a social movement within socialism. However, even Stalin did not deal more closely with the question of what changes in the relations of production within the state sector had to be sought in order to take steps along this path.*[61]

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59. *Ibid*.
60. *Ibid*., p. 55.
61. *Ibid*., p. 56.

The communists viewed the withering issue as part of economic planning. Molotov maintained that the five year plans that began in 1928 should rather have been a single long-term plan, which was broken down into five-year plans and should have spelt out a "specific way of life" moving toward communism. For him, like for the KPD(ML), maximum consumption was not a long-term goal for communism and if the general line was set on peaceful coexistence, there was no need for revolution.[62] Similarly counter-revolutionary was the slogan of being a society of the whole people, meaning the petit bourgeoisie and collective farmers, rather than a dictatorship of the working class.

In discussing solutions and planning, the KPD(ML) took up the issue of objective versus subjective causation. In their view the revolution was "betrayed" by both subjective and objective factors. However, they did not emphasize the objective side, which maintained that it had to happen the way it did happen and that there was little the workers could have done to prevent it and that there was little to learn from the failure. Rather, they took a more subjectivist view and that there were lessons to be learned.

About the objective-subjective issue, the Germans wrote:

> *We are opposed to a subjectivist view that, by saying the word "betrayal", considers everything to be made clear, but at the same time we are opposed to an objectivist view which declares that everything had to happen just as it happened, and precisely because it happened that way. Such a view denies the importance of the subjective efforts of the class forces and individuals involved. If this were the case, then all efforts to learn from history would be meaningless, because according to this view everything had to happen the way it did. But this is not the case, in a second attempt one can learn from the mistakes and shortcomings of the first. Such an objectivist attitude particularly whitewashes the revisionist, counter-revolutionary, backward-looking forces.*[63]

From the KPD(ML) subjectivist view, the post-war Soviet economy was at an appropriate point to push further toward state withering. During the previous several decades a majority of the economy had been socialized. Food, clothing, shelter, education and health were free or subsidized and commodity-money

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62. Chuev, *Molotov remembers*, pp. 247-248.
63. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 139.

relations did not dominate. In 1920 Lenin, responding to the demand of the workers, had signed a decree to eliminate money and credit entirely and replace it with units of labor time (This will cost so many hours of labor). Money was seen as part of bourgeois society. Unfortunately for the workers, they were only 15 percent of the population at that time and too weak to enforce the ban.

In the post-war era, the workers had become a majority and it was a good time in the KPD(ML) view to revert to Lenin's decree against money. *When and Why* observed, "The relations of production that were established in the 1930s, especially the system of leadership that was established at that time, no longer corresponded to the situation [in the 1950s]. In particular over-centralization had to be reversed in the interests of the working class."[64]

The KPD(ML) explained further about the workers regaining a voice in management:

> *The productive forces in the 1950s were at a much higher level than at the beginning of the 1930s. This increased the possibility, and at the same time the necessity for a greater participation of the working masses in the administration of the economy, state and society.*[65]

The Germans developed the point that the productive forces were much higher by citing statistics concerning growth during the Stalinist era:

> *Success was not lacking: The productive forces were developed to an enormous degree and, not the least, the number of workers and employees rose from 10.8 million in 1928 to 47.9 million in 1955, and the number of technical specialists with a university education increased from 233,000 to 2.2 million within the same period of time.*
>
> *Now, after the end of the war and the reconstruction of the economy, the workers' power could have reaped the fruits, could have strengthened the socialist order and taken steps towards communism on the basis of the developed productive forces; it could have drawn the workers in particular to a far greater extent into the direct management of production.*[66]

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64. *Ibid*., p. 74.

65. *Ibid*., p. 57.

66. *Ibid*., p. 136*, citing* Wolfgang Leonhard, *The Kremlin Since Stalin, 1962* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975, [1962]), LCCN 75008720; 403 pp. at p. 14.

In arguing for a revolution in the relations of production, the Germans discussed a number of interrelated strategies that could have been used to win back the proletarian dictatorship. These included:

> *(I) Strengthening the Sovnarkhoz or Regional Economic Councils.*
>
> *(II) Reducing class differences.*
>
> *(III) Replacing as the primary goal of society that of profit and efficiency with social needs goals of balanced development and production.*
>
> *(IV) Reducing economic centralization.*
>
> *(V) Attacking consumerist ideology.*

(I) More specifically, the first strategy to revolutionize the relations of production was to strengthen the Sovnarkhoz. This was a management system that would have enabled and required greater direct participation by the workers. They would have been especially useful to assist the working class to gain power in economic decisions against the pyramid-shaped management apparatus.[67] The Germans called the Regional Economic Councils a "third element" to balance out the commodity forces of the enterprise directors and the state planning domination by the bureaucrats. *When and Why* explained:

> *The state crutch and the commodity crutch mutually mitigated their respective shortcomings only when a third element intervened in a leading way, a socio-economic element which was not borrowed from the old society but embodied the future communism: the social leadership and control by the working people, the "strengthening of the working class as the ruling class in all pores of economic life." This class led by its party, had to ensure that production was oriented towards social interests. If this communist motive force was too weak, the signs of decay that emanated from the state crutch on the one hand and the commodity crutch on the other hand multiplied.*[68]

While the KPD(ML) advocated strengthening the Sovnarkhoz-Regional Economic Councils, they found useless the worker self-management system in

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67. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 81.
68. *Ibid*.

Yugoslavia. The workers in that country had no class-consciousness, but thought in the narrow terms of their enterprise.[69] Profit and foreign capital drove the system.[70] There was no planned economy because the capitalists did not want state interference.

(II) Besides strengthening the Sovnarkhoz, a second strategy advocated by the KPD(ML) was to reduce class differences by several related measures, including:

> *(II-1) Decreasing prices and increasing wages.*
>
> *(II-2) Shortening the workday.*
>
> *(II-3) Elimination of the privileges given to government and management officials.*
>
> *(II-4) Reducing the centralization of the economy.*

(II-1) Decreasing prices and increasing wages for reducing class differences as suggested by *When and Why* was a strategy which it took from Stalin's *Economic problems of socialism in the USSR* (1951) and gave the example of Stalin, during the post-war era of reducing year-by-year the commodity-money relations and social inequality by lowering prices. Molotov commented that the result of this program was that "We gained tremendously in terms of morale."[71]

(II-2) There was a related measure, which *When and Why* advocated and which was also inspired by Stalin and the working class. It involved shortening the workday to 5 or 6 hours. In explaining this strategy, the Germans quoted Stalin:

> *The members of society must be in a position to receive an education sufficient to enable them to be active agents of social development… It is necessary, first of all, to shorten the working day at least to six, and subsequently, to five hours. This is needed in order that the members of society might have the necessary free time to receive an all round education.*
>
> *It is necessary further to introduce a universal compulsory polytechnic education, which is required in order that the members of society might be*

69. *Ibid*., p. 99.
70. *Ibid*., pp. 95, 97.
71. Chuev, *Molotov remembers*., p. 298.

> *able freely to choose their occupations and not be tied to some one occupation all their lives. It is likewise necessary that housing conditions should be radically improved and that real wages of workers and employees should be at least double, if not more both by means of direct increases of wages and salaries, and, more especially, by further systematic reductions of prices for consumer goods.*[72]

(II-3) Yet another measure for reducing class differences, which the KPD(ML) advocated, was elimination of the privileges given to government and management officials. It was mentioned above in the section on Stalinist era problems that at the beginning of the 1920s, the party had established a "party-maximum" tax. This helped eliminate privileges at that time. Party members agreed to a 90 percent tax that went to the party on their income above 210 rubles per month.[73] This was the wage of a worker. The tax helped keep enterprise managers, state planning bureaucrats and technicians who had higher wages from joining the party, unless they really identified with the working class. Unfortunately for class differences reduction, the management-bureaucrat class gained the elimination of this tax in the 1930s.

Later, when there was an economy slump in 1970, Molotov advocated changing social relations by bringing back the tax. He commented:

> *Because we are now in a deep economic slump, raising prices is not the way out. I think we have to change social relations. To start with, let's impose a party maximum, a cap on remuneration of party members. This would have a tremendous material effect on the country and its morale. The trouble is that Khrushchevites still dominate, even in the Central Committee. Since Stalin's death we have lived on the reserves built up in Stalin's time.*[74]

The party tax was not brought back but the KPD(ML) noted gestures in that direction, such as happened in 1947 with the termination of the feeding and clothing the relatives of Politburo members at state expense.[75] About such

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72. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 91, quoting Joseph Stalin, *Economic problems of socialism in the USSR* (Ekonomicheskie problemy sotsializme. SSSR) (Moscow: Foreign Languages, Pub. House, 1952), 103 p., at pp. 70-72; LCCN 53030057; online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1951/economic-problems/index.htm

73. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 23.

74. Chuev, *Molotov remembers*., p. 401.

75. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p.55; citing Svetlana Alliluyeva, *Twenty Letters to a Friend* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), p. 209.

efforts, the Germans remarked that "consumption relations largely follow the relations of production. Of course, the struggle to limit differences in consumption does have its own significance, though the scope for this is extremely limited if relations of production are not revolutionized at the same time and above all."[76]

In other words, the KPD(ML) considered the party privilege problem as secondary to the relations of production problem. This somewhat contrasts with the view of the Communist Party of China (CPC), as represented by Li Shenming, an official at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). For him it was mainly the degeneration of the Soviet party that caused the country's failure.[77] Their relations to production were secondary. As a result the CPC conducts campaigns for party members against corruption. This includes campaigns against ideological corruption. In training films, books and party congresses, the lesson for the cadre is that without the greatest selfless dedication, the same capitalist chaos that took hold in the USSR will take hold in China.

(II-4) There was another strategy besides those dealing with prices, wages and privileges. The Germans supported Stalin's position on reducing class differences in agriculture. Stalin maintained that the working class had to set the strategic goal of creating a unified public ownership of productive property. The *When and Why* quoted Stalin on this:

> *It is necessary by means of gradual transitions carried out to the advantage of the collective farms, and, hence, of all society, to raise collective-farm property to the level of public property, and, also by means of gradual transitions, to replace commodity circulation by a system of products-exchange [that is, without the commodity-money relation, RM], under which the central government, or some other social-economic centre, might control the whole product of social production in the interests of society.*[78]

In achieving public ownership, Stalin proposed, as noted earlier, that a tax be placed on the collective farmers, so that their surplus output was shared in an egalitarian manner. Stalin said:

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76. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 55.

77. Li Shenming, "The Degeneration of the Soviet Communist Party," pp. 171-185.

78. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 140, quoting Stalin, *Economic problems of socialism in the USSR*, 68-69. The initials RM above stand for Roter Morgen Writers' Collective.

> *In order to raise collective-farm property to the level of public property, the surplus collective-farm output must be excluded from the system of commodity circulation and included in the system of products-exchange (that is, without commodity-money relations, RM) between state industry and the collective farms.*[79]

This proposal, according to Molotov, would likely have driven the peasants to ruin. That is, it would have driven them to state farms and to the working class.[80]

(III) A third interrelated part of the communist strategy advocated by the KPD(ML) involved replacing the profit and efficiency policy of the enterprise managers, which policy was aimed at enriching the managers, with the worker demands of a balanced development of the economy.[81] The German's commented that there was a higher profitability than that of the calculated short-term profit of individual enterprises. On this they quoted Stalin:

> *If profitableness is considered not from the standpoint of individual plants or industries, and not over a period of one year, but from the standpoint of the entire national economy and over a period of, say, ten or fifteen years, which is the only correct approach to the question, then the temporary and unstable profitableness of some plants or industries is beneath all comparison with that higher form of stable and permanent profitableness which we get from the operation of the law of balanced development of the national economy and economic planning, which save us from periodical economic crises disruptive to the national economy and causing tremendous material damage to society, and which ensure a continuous and high rate of expansion of our national economy.*[82]

The Germans commented that what Stalin had said about profit was self-evident for Marxists. That is, Stalin was explaining why one should hold on to socialism and not return to capitalism. The KPD(ML) concluded, "It seems almost scary to read such an argument, which Stalin was forced to make

79. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 97-98.
80. Chuev, *Molotov remembers*, p. 158.
81. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 90.
82. Ibid., pp. 89-90, quoting Stalin, *Economic problems*, p. 24.

in a discussion among 'Marxist' economists."[83] Marx had taught, as the Germans explained, that development and production under socialism was for social need:

> *[*It was] seemingly an absurd idea that production, accumulation, should be an end in itself, not oriented towards the satisfaction of social needs. This idea was by no means absurd: it expressed the aspiration of private interest to reassert itself as the sole interest, to cast off the shackles that socialism had placed on it. But the establishment of the unlimited private interest meant the elimination of the orientation towards communism, meant the elimination of the kernel of social domination over production, meant that production, accumulation, the utilization of value became again an end in itself. Stalin's fight against this was therefore a fight for the defense of socialism.[84]

(IV) A fourth part of the communist strategy advocated by the KPD(ML) involved reducing the centralization of the economy in order to strengthen worker influence at the expense of the enterprise managers and the state bureaucracy. The KPD(ML) commented about the benefits of decentralizing:

> *By increasing the decentralized activities socialist or communist centralism does not become weaker but stronger; decisions of central authorities are then reduced to those spheres in which in substance decisions can or must be made centrally. The sphere in which central authorities make decisions is thus reduced, but the decisions of central authorities take on a higher quality. At the same time the "central" behavior of decentralized levels and individuals, that is, the behavior of decentralized levels and individuals which is characterized by responsibility for society as a whole, is growing.*[85]

(V) A fifth KPD(ML) strategy for solving the Soviet faults was ideological. The ideology of the managerial and planner economists was that the consumerist philosophy at the heart of the crutches was socialist. The Germans commented, "The dogma prevailed among Soviet economists that 'our

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83. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 90.
84. *Ibid*,, p. 86.
85. *Ibid*., p. 80.

commodities are not commodities and our money is not money, and that the law of value does not work at all under socialism.' "[86]

To this view of the crutch problem, the Germans answered with working class ideology, as voiced by Lenin:

> *How could commodity-money categories, which can finally be overcome only with the transition to communism, be the panacea for solving the problems of socialism? They could be no more than a crutch that, in addition to limited positive effects also produced abundant negative ones. At best, the commodity crutch and the state crutch could be balanced against each other in such a way that the negative effects of both were kept within certain limits.*
>
> *The growing role of the working masses is strategically decisive for the strengthening of socialism – and this ultimately means: for the strengthening of the communist kernel in socialist society.*
>
> > *[quoting Lenin] Creative activity at the grass roots is the basic factor of the new public life… Socialism cannot be decreed from above. Its spirit rejects the mechanical bureaucratic approach: living, creative socialism is the product of the masses themselves.*[87]

86. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 110, quoting Anatolij I. Paschkow (Paschkov), *Oekonomische probleme des sozialismus: uebersetzung aus dem russischen* (Economic problems of socialism: translation from the Russian (Berlin [West]: Verl, The Wirtschaft, 1974), 527 pp, at p. 195; OCLC 905074480. The Russian version of the above is А.И. Пашков (AI Paškov [Anatolij Ignat□ev**ič])**, Экономические проблемы социализма : [stat□i, doklady i vystuplenija] (Ėkonomičeskie problemy socializma: [stat□i, doklady i vystuplenija]) (Москва: 1970; 527 p. OCLC 71560920

87. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 62. The Lenin quote: "Meeting of the All Russian Central Executive Committee," (November 4 (17) 1917), *Collected Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Pub. House, 1960-1970), LCCN 62000396, 46 vols., vol. 26, pp. 288-289; online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/nov/04a.htm.

Failure: Post-Stalin Enterprise Managers

The second-half of *When and Why* deals with the post-Stalin era. The Germans argue that whatever faults existed under Stalin, he was on the side of the proletarian dictatorship and a hindrance to the liberal program of the enterprise managers. On the other hand Stalin's successors, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, are seen as counter-revolutionaries. To obtain and keep power they balanced the interests of the various groups that made up the new ruling class. The groups were the enterprise managers, government planners, party bureaucrats and peasants.

The new ruling class did not include the workers. The KPD(ML) summarized about their exclusion from power:

> *But after the counter-revolutionary overthrow after Stalin's death, this third element [working class] was not only weak; it had been eliminated. Despite the occasional phrases of Khrushchev's people and later also of the Brezhnev leadership that the workers must be called upon to lead, the state power now served the goal of keeping the working class permanently away from any leadership of production and society in general… Instead of being oriented towards communism, Soviet society rapidly atomized itself into many different groups and individuals pursuing their respective interests.*[88]

The most powerful groups within the new ruling class were the managers and planners. They were antagonistic to each other, with the liberal managers seeking to end government interference and the planners and Communist Party seeking to keep their jobs and privileges. The Germans explained:

> *The two socio-economic factors that socialism had used as crutches now appeared as the sole forces regulating economic life: on the one hand, the commodity element, and on the other, state ownership in terms of planning and management of production. In terms of personnel, it was the two main groupings within the new ruling class mentioned above that embodied these two socio-economic forces, and they worked against each other to a certain extent.*

88. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 154-155.

> *They were united by their common class interest, which was to keep the working class from exercising power, to determine production and distribution alone and to use the peasants as allies. However, this class was not homogeneous; there were considerable conflicts of interest within this class. The party and state bureaucracy wanted to put an end to the elimination [process] of state ownership in economic life to a certain extent; the enterprise managers wanted to continue this process.*[89]

In balancing the competing interests, Khrushchev's economic policies vacillated. For example, in 1955 he backed legislation that increased the powers of the enterprise mangers at the expense of the planners. The book summarized:

> *The enterprise managers were given the right, with certain restrictions, to change the quarterly plans according to their own conditions, to take orders outside the plan and, if no prices were fixed, to set prices and rates for certain orders. The enterprise managers were also allowed to decide on the operating funds for the reconstruction and expansion building at their own discretion, to independently procure building materials from local industry, to confirm projects, and if necessary, to modify them. Under the existing arrangements, they were allowed to determine the wages for individual categories themselves and, in agreement with the unions, to adapt the wage system to the needs of the enterprise.*[90]

Khrushchev used both communist and consumerist ideology and measures to mask his anti-communist politics. About the use of communist ideology and measures which promised better working conditions, the KPD(ML) observed:

> *Khrushchev believed in "communism" in the sense that he thought there was some kind of world schematic that would make the Soviet Union superior to the West in one way or another. He would certainly have liked the effect of such a world schematic. He may also have believed that such a world schematic would soon ensure that there would be enough goulash for everyone...*
>
> *The bitter irony of history provided that Khrushchev of all people, the gravedigger of the workers' power, was able to announce at the 20th Party*

89. Ibid., pp. 150-151.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

> *Congress some measures that alleviated the immediate pressure on the workers. For example, the decision of June 26, 1940, that workers were not allowed to leave their workplaces and that if they were late by more than 20 minutes they were punished with up to 6 months of educational work at the workplace, was revoked. It was not to Khrushchev's merit that this measure, born out of the war emergency, could be ended now, after the reconstruction of the economy, but it gave him the opportunity to act as a friend of the workers.*
>
> *Furthermore, working hours were reduced and the workers' right to permanent employment was abolished. A two-week period of notice was introduced, and the penalties for workers who left their jobs without official permission were lifted. The coercive measures in question were introduced in the 1930s. The reason for this was the imperative need to achieve an enormous impetus to industrialization in record time and to exert considerable pressure on the mass of workers of peasant background to this end. Success was not lacking.*[91]

Related to "communist" working conditions, the new ruling class promised that the liberal reforms and decreases in planning would bring a miracle increase of food, clothing and shelter. The Germans summarized:

> *The leadership thus promised the population miracles in terms of increasing consumption; presumably it feared the resistance of the communists against the expansion of commodity-money relations and wanted to counteract this resistance in this way. And the revolutionary communists had to swallow yet another toad: Mikoyan proposed the import of food and consumer goods from abroad. This meant a weakening of economic planning, as it made the Soviet power much more dependent on the forces of the world capitalist market. Here, too, the revisionists demagogically waved the flag that one must "satisfy the needs of the people."*[92]

However, what happened with the decrease in economic planning was not an improvement in consumption. The anarchy of production resulted in a number of problems, including:

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91. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136, 139. citing Leonhard, *The Kremlin Since Stalin, 1962*, p. 152 concerning worker conditions.

92. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 120.

(I) a scarcity in basic goods.

(II) a degeneration in political, social and economic morals.

(III) an imperialist foreign policy.

(I) More specifically, the first problem resulting from the lack of planning was a chronic problem of supplying basic needs. The focus on consumerism and the limitation on heavy industry production meant the farmers were left without sufficient tractors and their production declined. *When and Why* observed:

> *The Soviet Union, a grain exporter in Stalin's time, had to import grain… Agriculture was in a situation which could only be described as catastrophic. This was above all a consequence of the "new course" of the leadership. Less and less was heard of the consumer goods program that was announced with great pomp.*[93]

(II) A second problem resulting from the counter-revolution besides commodity shortages, was a degeneration in political, social and economic morals. According to the book, bribery was a problem at all levels.[94] About the corruption among Communist Party officials, the book states:

> *The Party functionaries in their own interest thus helped the economic managers concerned to defraud the society by giving the impression, contrary to the facts, that the plan had been "fulfilled"… It was precisely the Party functionaries who acted in the nooks and crannies of the decaying system, using relationships, both legal and illegal, up to and including the mafia-like structures and old-boy networks that increasingly dominated society under Brezhnev.*[95]

(III) A third problem that came with the lack of planning was an imperialist foreign policy. The Soviets built up their military capability. About increasing expenditures for imperialism, *When and Why* commented:

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93. *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 144.
94. *Ibid.*, pp. 161-165.
95. *Ibid.*, pp. 121, 144.

> *The arms race with the USA, which now [in 1971] began, was by no means oriented towards national defense, but towards the interests of the military-industrial complex and the imperialist objectives of the Soviet Union. The war in Afghanistan, for example, had just as much to do with the "country's security," as Brezhnev demagogically stated, as the deployment of the German army in former Yugoslavia had to do with the security of Germany, that is, nothing at all. Brezhnev guaranteed that at least 13-14% of the Soviet national product was continuously spent on armaments, that is, it was used unproductively. The whole industry was oriented towards military considerations.*[96]

Not a Return to Capitalism Until the 1980s

From the KPD(ML) view, the counter-revolution was not completed in the 1950s and 1960s. That came in the 1980s. Until then the Communist Party, the state planners (Gosplan) and the black marketers retained power.[97] The Germans commented:

> *Decentralization continued, but it should not be exaggerated; the essential interests of the state apparatuses were not touched. The Party apparatus would continue to exert direct and tangible influence on the management of the economy, regardless of any reforms.*[98]

In holding that the counter-revolution was not complete and that capitalism was not re-established, the Germans used a number of arguments, which they backed up with quotes from Marx. The arguments included,

> *(I) The scarcity of commodities and excess of money.*
>
> *(II) The lack of freedom for the bourgeoisie.*
>
> *(III) The setting of prices by the government.*
>
> *(IV) The lack of competition between the state enterprises.*
>
> *(V) The existence of the black market.*

96. *Ibid.*, p. 187, quoting Brezhnev, *Report of the CC to the 24th Congress of the CPSU* (Moscow: 1971), p. 54.

97. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, pp. 152-153.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 160.

Each of those arguments will be explained below. But first there will be mentioned the reason the KPD(ML) held that the issue of the Soviet's non-return was important. They wrote:

> *The assertion that the social orders in question were capitalist does not correspond to reality, so that such an assertion renders oneself untrustworthy and does not allow one to explain the events in question, thus falling into idealist schemes. On the other hand, it is necessary to work out the class content of state ownership in economic management.*[99]

(I) In their first argument that the Soviets did not return to capitalism in the immediate post-World War II era, the Germans emphasized commodity scarcity. They pointed out that capitalism was characterized by excessive commodity production, which was absent from the USSR. Incorporating a quote from Marx, they stated, "The wealth of those societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails, presents itself as 'an immense accumulation of commodities' ".[100] Related to the lack of commodities, the Germans also noted the chronic excess of money. This was not characteristic of capitalism.[101]

(II) A second KPD(ML) argument about capitalism having not been achieved, was that the Soviet bourgeoisie did not have the "freedom" that a capitalist society gave to that class. The Germans wrote:

> *The undisturbed bourgeois form of movement of these individuals was prevented by hierarchical power apparatuses. (Such a social structure necessarily involved a diverse old-boy network.) This contradiction leads to the decay of society in all spheres, a decay that was still different from the decay inherent in a monopoly capitalist system, a decay that was increasingly perceived as unbearable by most people in the countries dominated by the revisionists, so unbearable that the "freedoms" of the capitalist countries increasingly appeared as a temptation. The basis of this decay is to be found in economics.*[102]

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99. *Ibid.*, pp. 179-180.

100. *Ibid.*, p. 167. The citation was to (Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, part 1, ch. I, sect. 1, in Marx Engels *Works*, vol. 23, p. 49.

101. KPD(ML), *When and Why*, p. 166.

102. Ibid., p. 155.

(III) A third point offered by the Germans about the non-return of capitalism was that the Economic Councils and the State Planning Commission still set prices, not the market. The Germans commented, "The bulk of prices remained fixed by the state, and only in the phase of immediate transition to capitalism was this substantially relaxed."[103]

(IV) A fourth argument for the non-return of capitalism was that there was no competition between the state enterprises. According to Marx, capitalism required competition. As support for their argument the KPD(ML) offered the following passage from Marx:

> *Free competition is the relation of capital to itself as another capital, i.e. the real behavior of capital as capital... The reciprocal compulsion exerted under free competition by capitals upon one another, upon labor, etc. (the competition of workers among themselves is merely another form of the competition of capitals) is the free, and at the same time real, development of wealth as capital… Profit-making, the utilization of value is the purpose, the internal tendency of capitalist production, and competition is the "outwardly appearing" sting that enforces the internal law of coercion.*[104]

Because competition was lacking in the degenerated, formerly socialist countries, there were no crises of overproduction there, and there was no oversupply (measured by effective demand) of commodities, but rather an undersupply: money surplus or lack of commodities was chronic.

(V) A fifth argument about capitalism's status dealt with the black market economy, which according to the KPD(ML), grew to be one-fifth of the gross national product.[105] The Germans stated, "The growth of an illegal capitalist black market alongside the official state market was precisely an expression of the fact that the latter was not based on the economic laws of commodity production and was therefore also not a capitalist market."[106]

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103. *Ibid.*, p. 171.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175' citing Marx, "Outlines of the Critique of Political Economy," III. Chapter on Capital, [Fixed and Circulating Capital], Marx Engels, *Works*, vol. 29, pp. 38-39; online at https://marxists.architexturez.net/archive/marx/works/1857/grundrisse/ch12.htm#iii2 (footnote 57) (free competition is the relation of capital to itself as another capital).

105. *Ibid.*, p. 167.

106. *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Conclusion

Among the studies done by communist parties, the KPD(ML) interpretation gives a unique insight and guidance for future work. Its conclusions are, first, the USSR was unsurpassed in human history in terms of economic and spiritual achievement for the working class. Second, the path was wide open after World War II for advancement to the communist stage of history. The step that should have been taken, as it was discussed at the time, was to revolutionize the relations of production. Third, the failure to take the communist path allowed the money-commodity relations that were originally adopted as a temporary measure, to bring on a counter-revolution.

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